

The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland – Trussell Trust and Foodbank Pilot

Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance

January 2024

Update December 2025

SGN



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1 Description

Project title	The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland – Trussell Trust and Foodbank Pilot
Funding GDN(s)	SGN
New/Updated (indicate as appropriate)	New Update December 2025
For Collaborative VCMA Projects:	N/A
Date of PEA submission:	January 2024 Update December 2025
Project contact name:	Margaret Hamilton
Project contact number/email:	Margaret.Hamilton@sgn.co.uk
Total cost (£k)	£43,282.50 Update December 2025 Winter Support - £9,176.40 Total cost - £52,458.90
Total VCMA funding required (£k)	£43,282.50 Update December 2025 Winter Support - £9,176.40 Total - £52,458.90

2 Problem statement

People living in areas of high socioeconomic deprivation 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 limited household income, poor housing, and health status.

The ALLIANCE foodbank pilot (in partnership with Trussell Trust foodbanks) operates out of 5 foodbank sites across 2 Glasgow localities. Their core role will include supporting people referred directly to them because their needs are too complex for simple signposting, as well as people who self-refer to them, following up people who have received signposting advice by the food bank team to offer problem solving where needed, and building capacity in the community through networks and links with other activities and organisations. Much of the support offered to people will involve using motivational and communication skills to encourage clients to take the steps needed, however practical problem solving will also be a key skill offered. The potential workload of links workers is therefore considerable, reflecting the intense workload pressures under which food banks operate. The purpose of the Links Worker is not to displace the food bank team but to contribute a specific skill set and to support the development of the team as a key community asset to encourage and support self-management.

We know from the first 3 months of the foodbank pilot that the people they support encounter a range of issues, are impacted by multiple forms of marginalisation, have a range of complex health needs, are living on low incomes, and managing with the costs associated with heating their home. These issues include:

- 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 detectors. 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
- Even for those living in social rented housing, issues are brought to the attention of Links Workers around fuel and food poverty
- The pandemic has worsened people's mental health – both for those with pre-existing mental health conditions and those whose mental health has deteriorated because of the pandemic. There is

evidence of this for people with learning disabilities and autism. This is having an impact on people's resilience and sense of self-efficacy.

- The pandemic has contributed to a worsening of people's health status because of the disruption to health services and social care packages¹ and has also had a significant impact on unpaid carers.
- The most prevalent reasons for seeing a foodbank links worker (Community Links Practitioner – CLP) are poverty/welfare/income related reasons (50%) and housing (15%).
- Feedback demonstrates that the help received with getting access to food provides such a relief to people who have to choose between food and fuel. And this leads to applying for warm home discounts and meetings with welfare advisers to determine how to reduce costs etc.
- Money advice services are currently overstretched across Glasgow City; foodbank links workers have access to money advice workers who are also based within foodbank sites.

Partnering with SGN and Trussell Trust will provide much needed support to families visiting food banks to access support services for energy safeguarding and access to Community Links Practitioner Support Services local to their area.

Update December 2025:

The difficult financial circumstances that lead people to rely on food banks almost always mean they are also struggling to heat and power their homes. Many recipients tell us that receiving a food parcel allows them to use their limited funds for heating, sometimes for the first time in weeks, but they worry about the next time they are forced to choose between warmth and food.

Parents express deep concern about the impact on their children, while those with physical or mental health conditions often find their symptoms worsened by living in cold, damp environments. People frequently share that they must choose foods that require minimal cooking to save on fuel costs, limiting their ability to prepare nutritious meals.

Some describe seeking out warm public spaces like libraries, community hubs, and even food banks themselves, just to escape the chill, dreading the moment they have to return to a cold home. These stories highlight the harsh reality of energy poverty and its profound effect on health, wellbeing, and dignity.

3 Scope and objectives

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.

There are two phases to the scope of this work:

1. Initially, through the ALLIANCE Foodbank Links Worker (FLW) pilot, our FLW will identify eligible customers for referral for financial crisis support and to other services including the Priority Services Register and raise awareness of the dangers of Carbon Monoxide.
2. The ALLIANCE team will engage, share training and learning with Trussell Trust staff and volunteers to explore the further support and services which are needed by people accessing foodbanks, identify gaps and work to define and develop solutions which would address these gaps. In addition, there will be communication sessions and materials in accessible formats to ensure that eligible households are engaged to sign up to support services including the Priority Services Register using the time allocated already to planned foodbank sessions and space they are accommodated within.

The pilot programme has 2 years funding for the full-time post based in the Southwest of Glasgow and 1 year funding for 0.5 post based in the Northeast of Glasgow.

¹ <https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Health-Wellbeing-and-the-COVID-19-Pandemic-Final-Report.pdf>

The objectives of this work are to:

1. Develop a coordinated approach to ensuring there is the required support available to people accessing foodbanks, around maintaining safe, affordable, and efficient home.
2. Build connections between third sector partners and SGN and other related utility infrastructure companies in Scotland
3. Ensure financial support is available to people accessing foodbanks at risk of fuel poverty, and that they are identified as priority customers and receive the additional support that this entitles them to
4. Develop information resources with ALLIANCE members to support signposting, ensuring that information is accessible and inclusive, and that active referral pathways are effective
5. Support people to navigate the services on offer taking into account their personalised circumstances
6. Identify gaps in support and services and work with ALLIANCE members and links worker service to design and develop solutions to these
7. Link eligible individuals with other services that may offer them support and information (e.g. A Local Information Service for Scotland (ALISS) and ALLIANCE's condition specific Lived Experience Networks).
8. Help to tackle stigma around vulnerability and poverty and gather evidence and insights which can be shared with relevant stakeholders.

Update December 2025:

Through our Winter Support initiative, the project aims to support households and families accessing the food bank by providing Winter Warmth Packs that include a heated throw and / or an electric hot water bottle. These items offer a practical and energy-efficient way to stay warm during the colder months.

While every household presenting at the foodbank would benefit from this support, our priority is to reach those with the greatest vulnerabilities, such as families with young children, individuals managing multiple health conditions, and those who have specifically shared that they are unable to heat their homes. By targeting these groups, we can help alleviate the immediate hardship of living in cold conditions and reduce the associated risks to health and wellbeing.

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 pillars 2, 3 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'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 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. Alliance and Trussell Trust evidence

The Alliance has been collaborating with SGN since 2021 and has achieved success through this with our Community Links Worker programme which has been based within GP practices (primary care) for almost 10 years. Taking a person-centred approach, the CLP (Community Links Practitioner) supports the individual to address any issues impacting on their health and wellbeing such as housing, fuel insecurity, or the cost-of-living crisis. Success from the programme has given clarity that the links approach could be delivered in a similar way across the foodbanks by the Trussell Trust links workers to help address the issues people are facing.

Our latest collaboration with the Trussell Trust has brought about the opportunity to share the "links approach" and transfer the skills and knowledge from a primary care setting to foodbanks. Foodbank staff and volunteers have been supporting those most marginalised to receive food supplies. Working with a cross section of people such as asylum seekers, refugees, one parent families, families on a lower income, older adults, and individuals not accessing support elsewhere, they have found that people struggle to understand their rights and what is available to them or are accessing the foodbank longer term without assistance to address the underlying issues causing them to make use of their service. Having foodbank link workers available to spend more time getting to understand the issues people face, and supporting to address those issues, there is much potential to implement the links approach and reach many families and individuals in need. Like their primary care colleagues, they have the skillset and ability to refer or signpost to services and respond to immediate need.

Using the learning from the primary care links workers, foodbank links workers will be able to utilise the time and space available to them at foodbank sessions to raise awareness of the Priority Services Register and actively sign people up or ensure contact details are up to date when they identify someone already on the PSR. Similarly, foodbank CLPs can have conversations around carbon monoxide awareness, establishing if someone is at risk and linking in with assistance.

6 Outcomes, associated actions and success criteria

6.1. Outcomes and associated actions

This project will directly engage Alliance Link Workers and foodbank employed staff and volunteers (approximately 30 people) to provide a minimum of 525 people who use the service with support and where required access to emergency crisis fuel funds and energy safeguarding advice. As this is a pilot, we're looking to better understand the other outcomes linked to the training and the support provided to households with complex and varied needs.

Training and knowledge exchange with the Trussell Trust staff and volunteers could see, approximately, a further 7000 people who use the foodbank be given information on PSR registration and be given onward referral/signposting to schemes designed to help reduce costs and maintain a warm home.

We aim to support ALLIANCE Link Workers, Trussell Trust staff and volunteers to support people accessing foodbanks that may include people with long term conditions, young families, disabled people, and unpaid carers to have

- an increased knowledge of the support available to people eligible for Priority Service Register and feel better able to identify and effectively refer people who would benefit from the tailored support available.
- raise awareness of the risks of Carbon Monoxide and how to mitigate these.
- access to emergency crisis funding and support.
- reduce stress, and improved health and wellbeing.
- Increased learnings of the issues impacting on people accessing foodbanks in terms of using energy safety, efficiency, and affordability.

6.2. Success Criteria

A minimum of 525 people supported within an 18-month period from Foodbank pilot enabling greater access to;

- Emergency crisis fuel funds
- Priority Service Register registration
- CO Safety conversation and access to a working CO alarm where required
- Onward referrals and signposting to schemes designed to help those reduce costs to maintain a warm home

Approximately 7,000 people supported over the 18-month period (and longer) enabling greater access to:

- Priority Services Register registration
- Onward referrals and signposting to schemes designed to help those reduce costs to maintain a warm home

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

- Monitor outcomes against services provided ensuring that those trained on the support services are confident in their ability to identify and support eligible customers to relevant help including confidently promote the benefits of the Priority Services Register and the CO Safety Scheme
- Monitor the take up and confidence of service users to the Links Worker service to the Priority Services Register and CO Safety survey
- Generate learning reports from insights generated from the engagement with ALLIANCE Links Workers and member organisations
- Work closely with our partners to ensure that we all understand the issues faced to continue to develop our services by need

Update December 2025:

During the winter months, the five food bank sites collectively support an average of 271 households per month. While every household would benefit from additional warmth, this project focuses on those with the greatest vulnerabilities and need.

Our goal through this additional support, is to provide at least **180 households** with a Winter Warmth Pack, which can include:

- **A heated throw:** an energy-efficient way to stay warm without heating an entire home, and/or;
- **An electric hot water bottle:** offering comfort and targeted warmth at minimal cost

Families and multi person households will be offered both items, with single person households able to choose one item.

By prioritizing families with young children, individuals with multiple health conditions, and those who have disclosed being unable to heat their homes, we aim to reduce the immediate risks associated with cold living conditions and improve overall wellbeing for those most in need.

7 Project partners and third parties involved

The Health and Social Care ALLIANCE - will lead the delivery of this pilot project. They are the national third sector intermediary for a range of health and social care organisations with a growing membership of over 3,000 national and local third sector organisations, associates in the statutory and private sectors, disabled people, people living with long term conditions and unpaid carers. Many NHS Boards, Health and Social Care Partnerships, Medical Practices, Third Sector Interfaces, Libraries and Access Panels are also members.

SGN – lead gas network providing support to the delivery team, including training on energy 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.

Trussell Trust - Working in partnership with The ALLIANCE to deliver this project, Trussell Trust supports a nationwide network of food banks to provide emergency food and support to people facing hardship, and campaign for change to end the need for food banks in the UK.

Between April 2022 and March 2023, food banks in their network provided almost 3 million food supplies to people in crisis, a 37% increase on the previous year.

Foodbanks – Working in partnership with The ALLIANCE this project will operate out of 5 foodbank sites across 2 Glasgow localities, supporting people referred directly to them.

8 Potential for new learning

Through ongoing monitoring of the impact of this project on ALLIANCE Foodbank Links Workers, Foodbank staff and volunteers and ultimately people that access foodbanks, we will produce insights and an annual evaluation report that will provide insights for SGN into; barriers faced, effective engagement, inclusive communication and information, 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 clients of the Alliance Foodbank Links Worker pilot and adapt the support provided to address barriers to a safe and warm home.

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.

9 Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations

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 £4.98.

Total cost	£43,282.50
Total gross present value	£258,621.31
Net Present Value (NPV)	£215,338.81
SROI	£4.98

Update December 2025:

We have used the GDN Rulebook developed in partnership with SIRIO Strategies as part of the Industry Standard Social Value Framework to carry out an assessment of the additional outcomes and cost linked to this Winter Support Initiative update. We have combined this with the values from the original partnership social value forecast detailed above to give our revised overall SROI.

Carrying out this combined assessment based on the predicted outcomes for this activity we forecast a revised positive net Social Return on Investment of £5.38.

Total cost	£52,458.90
Total gross present value	£334,584.16
Net Present Value (NPV)	£282,125.26
SROI	£5.38

10 VCMA Project start and end date

The pilot project will run from January 2024 to June 2025

Update December 2025:

This additional Winter Warmth Pack support will run for three months, from January 2026 to March 2026.

11 Geographic area

Southwest and Northeast Glasgow

12 Internal Governance and project management evidence

SGN has worked alongside Alliance Scotland 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 at £4.98 using the DNO methodology/rulebook with additional proxies developed for GDN activity.

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.

Update December 2025:

The original SROI forecast was assessed in conjunction with SIA Partners and forecast at providing a net SROI of £4.98. For the update of this partnership to incorporate additional Winter Warmth Pack support for winter 2025/26 we have used the GDN Rulebook developed by SIRIO Strategies as part of the Industry Standard Social Value Framework to forecast the revised social value and SROI. As detailed above we have reviewed the additional outcomes and cost which gives a revised overall forecast SROI of £5.38 for each £1 invested when combined with the original SROI. This will be monitored closely to ensure we adhere to the VCMA governance criteria.