

Energy Support for Carers – Kent

Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA)

Updated: April 2026

PEA reference: PCG-SGNStH-021a



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Project registration table

Project summary	
Project title	Energy Support for Carers – Kent
Strategic area	Supporting Priority Customer Groups
Lead partner name	Alzheimer’s Dementia Support Services (ADSS)
New/Updated (indicate as appropriate)	New
Date of PEA submission	March 2026
Project start and end date	April 26 – March 2028
Project location	Kent
Project contact	
Name	Janet Duggan
Contact details	Positive.impact@sgn.co.uk
Project partners and third parties involved	
Organisation name	Role
Alzheimer’s Dementia Support Services (ADSS)	Delivery of the core funded service
Gas Safe Charity	Providing Think CO training
Kent Local Authorities	Referral pathway
Age UK Kent Rivers	Referral pathway
Green Doctors	Providing in-depth debt advice
IncomeMax	Providing in-depth income maximisation support
Medway Social Services and Kent County Council Social Services	Referral pathway
Kent Fire and Rescue Service	Referral pathway for Safe and Well visits
Costs and funding	
Total cost (£k)	Redacted due to commercial sensitivity
Total VCMA funding required (£k)	£100,000
Total BAU vulnerability and CO safety activity baseline allowance funding by activity (£k)	Redacted due to commercial sensitivity

Problem(s)

This section needs to outline the problem(s) which is/are being addressed by the VCMA project.

UK energy prices have almost doubled since 2021, resulting in a sharp increase in fuel poverty. An estimated 6.7 million households are now affected, with 13% of the population struggling to heat their homes. Nearly half of low-income households live in hard to heat properties, which are linked to poor health outcomes for children and young people, including respiratory illness, impaired development, and long-term conditions.

Unpaid carers are disproportionately affected. Census 2021 identified 5.7 million unpaid carers in across the UK, though estimates suggest the true figure may be as high as 10.6 million. Families provide most care in the UK, exceeding the contribution of social care services and private providers. Between 2010 and 2020, 4.3 million people became unpaid carers each year, around 12,000 a day, with women more likely to provide high intensity care during working age.

Across the UK, carers face far higher rates of fuel poverty than the general population. While the national average is 13%, 28% of unpaid carers living alone are in fuel poverty, rising to 36% for single adult carers with children. The cost-of-living crisis has intensified pressures. [Carers UK's State of Caring Survey 2024](#) report states that a quarter of carers are cutting back on essentials such as food or heating, and nearly two thirds are extremely worried about meeting monthly costs. Caring brings unavoidable additional expenses, including higher energy use due to time spent at home and the need to keep vulnerable people warm or run medical equipment.

[Research](#) highlights people living with dementia are at significantly higher risk of being scammed due to changes in judgement, confusion, and difficulties with decision making and managing money, making it harder to identify fraudulent contact. This places additional stress on carers, who often monitor related finances, and safeguard their loved ones from increasingly sophisticated scams.

Mental health impacts are severe – carers are more likely to experience energy debt, loneliness, and isolation, with caring increasingly recognised as a social determinant of health.

These national challenges are acutely reflected in Kent where [89,335 households](#) (11%) are fuel poor, placing carers and the people they support under growing pressure. The county also has a large population of people living with dementia, with 24,000 diagnosed in Kent. Carers in Kent face challenges that reflect, and often exceed, the national picture. Dementia carers are frequently reaching crisis point, with one in three reporting poor emotional health and 33% experiencing worsening physical health. Despite this, 71% say they do not receive the support they need.

Carers need clear, accessible support to navigate systems meant to protect them, yet many miss out due to complex processes, poor communication, and the difficulty of applying while managing demanding caring roles. Many struggle to access benefits such as Attendance Allowance or to register for schemes like the Priority Services Register. Support with housing, adaptations and energy efficiency can also be hard to obtain, with long waits and inconsistent eligibility. These gaps leave carers under increasing financial and emotional strain and without the safety nets designed to prevent crisis.

Scope and objectives

Outline the scope and objectives of the VCMA project linked to the problem statement above. This should be clearly defined including the benefits which would directly impact customers on the participating GDNs' network(s), and where the benefits of the VCMA Projects lie.

Alzheimer's Dementia Support Services (ADSS) provides specialist support for people living with dementia and their carers across North Kent, Medway, Swale and West Kent.

This programme will deliver a targeted, preventative fuel poverty and energy safeguarding support for unpaid carers and the people they care for, delivered in partnership between SGN and Alzheimer's Dementia Support Services (ADSS).

Together, we'll help carers and people living with dementia maintain safe, warm, and energy efficient homes by providing clear, accessible and dementia-sensitive guidance on home energy safety, efficiency, carbon monoxide awareness and avoiding scams.

Our programme will:

- Deliver dementia-friendly Home Energy Efficiency and Safety talks tailored specifically for carers and people living with dementia, ensuring complex information is presented in accessible and supportive ways.
- Build new partnerships with community organisations in West Kent, embedding ADSS sessions within warm spaces, dementia groups, and community hubs, and exploring opportunities to establish ADSS-led warm spaces where gaps exist.
- Provide targeted home energy safeguarding advice, improving energy efficiency, reducing bills, and helping households manage appliances and heating systems safely.
- Offer home safety interventions, including provision of carbon monoxide alarms and guidance on identifying unsafe appliances, financial scams, and energy-related risks.
- Support carers in their vital but often isolated role, recognising the additional pressures faced by those caring for someone with dementia, and ensuring they can access timely, personalised fuel poverty support.
- Reach hidden households, including those who do not identify as carers or who face barriers to accessing formal services, through proactive outreach across dementia groups, warm hubs, carer forums, and community events.
- Provide wider support through coordinated referrals to partners such as Citizens Advice, Fire and Rescue Services, IncomeMax, health services, and voluntary sector organisations, ensuring a holistic response to risks associated with cold homes, unsafe conditions, and financial hardship.

Project design engagement

Targeting vulnerability support: This must describe how the GDN(s) identified the vulnerability need being addressed through the VCMA project, including the use of consumer research, stakeholder engagement, and data and technology.

Evidence of stakeholder and/or customer support: Information regarding all stakeholder and/or customer engagement which has contributed to the development of the VCMA Project.

Stakeholder project design input: How stakeholders were actively involved in the project design, and how their input and feedback were incorporated to shape the project design. Where stakeholders disagree about the project design, justification must be provided for why the current project design is deemed preferable.

The design of this project has been shaped by the identification of a significant and growing vulnerability among unpaid carers, informed by national carer data, regional deprivation analysis, and insight gathered through our 18-month partnership with Alzheimer's Dementia Support Services (ADSS) in Kent.

Through this work, and through engagement with local carer support teams, health professionals, and community organisations, we have seen firsthand the financial strain, increased energy use, and restricted income experienced by carers, particularly those providing high-intensity care or supporting people with dementia. These insights, reinforced by evidence of unclaimed benefits, low awareness of schemes such as the Priority Services Register (PSR), and barriers to accessing housing and energy support, guided our approach to designing a service that connects carers to the right help at the right time.

Stakeholders have played an active role in shaping the model. Home energy advisers highlighted the need for flexible, face-to-face outreach in community settings, while carers themselves stressed the importance of support that is accessible whether they can leave the home or not, and utility partners emphasised clearer pathways into social tariffs, PSR registration, and energy-efficiency support.

Throughout the partnership, we've worked together to test approaches, share learning, and make joint decisions on the most effective use of available funding to strengthen the carer support network across Kent. Stakeholder feedback consistently reinforced the need for a scalable, inclusive model that addresses the interconnected challenges of energy affordability, health, and income for carers, while recognising the diversity of caring situations and the importance of accessible, personalised support.

This project has also been shaped by the principles codeveloped with our Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Steering Group (VSG), ensuring that carers, as a priority customer group, are meaningfully involved in the design of locally accessible services. By grounding the project in a shared, evidence-based understanding of vulnerability we're building a service that is not only responsive to the lived experience of carers but also aligned with wider commitments to fairness, inclusion, and targeted support for those most at risk.

Why the project is being funded through the VCMA

This should include an explanation of why the VCMA project meets the VCMA eligibility criteria, and how it aligns with the GDN's VCMA collaborative strategy.

This project meets the VCMA eligibility criteria because it directly supports our Vulnerability Strategy and our overarching ambition to keep communities safe, warm, and supported, both now and as we transition toward a green, clean energy future. Our strategy places vulnerable households at the centre of our decision making, ensuring that those most in need receive meaningful, practical assistance.

The project is designed to help us deliver our Business Plan commitments, particularly two key customer pledges, the first to support at least 650,000 of the most vulnerable households over the next five years. The second, to ensure that the project has been designed to ensure that it delivers meaningful outcomes and measurable value for customers and stakeholders. This includes maximising the social return on investment (SROI) for every pound spent, while consistently prioritising the needs and experiences of vulnerable customers.

In addition, the project reflects the Collaborative Gas Networks' shared approach to vulnerability, delivering support across the following core theme areas:

- Providing Services Beyond the Meter – ensuring customers receive holistic support that extends beyond traditional gas network responsibilities.
- Tackling Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability – helping households reduce energy costs, improve efficiency, and access essential advice.
- Supporting Priority Customer Groups – identifying and assisting those with heightened needs, ensuring they receive tailored and timely support.
- Reducing Carbon Monoxide Harm – raising awareness, improving safety, and reducing the risks associated with CO exposure.

By addressing these themes, the project demonstrates strong strategic alignment and delivers tangible benefits to vulnerable customers, making it a clear fit for VCMA funding.

This project forms part of the 'Supporting Priority Customer Groups' theme and budget area.

How VCMA funding complements or supplements BAU activities

Where the VCMA Project is being delivered alongside a BAU vulnerability and/or CO safety activity or activities funded through the GDN's baseline allowance, the GDN must provide sufficient evidence that the VCMA Project complements or supplements the BAU activity or activities to prevent the risk of double funding.

By working in partnership with us, Alzheimer's Dementia Support Services (ADSS) has established a robust referral pathway to raise concerns related to key energy safeguarding services. This collaboration ensures that issues affecting vulnerable individuals, particularly those who may struggle to access or navigate utility services are identified early and directed to the appropriate support from their utility companies.

As a trusted organisation, ADSS is well placed to engage effectively with vulnerable individuals and refer eligible people for BAU funded support. This includes access to carbon monoxide alarms, Locking Cooker Valves, and other measures that help maintain safety and independence in the home.

Justification for why the project should not be collaborative

This should include evidenced reasoning as to why the VCMA Project cannot, or should not, be delivered in collaboration with other GDNs. For example, this could include the unique context within a network area, or the development of an innovative pilot project.

This project is not collaborative because it is intentionally designed as a targeted local intervention delivered by a partner with deep roots in Kent.

Alzheimer's Dementia Support Services (ADSS) operates exclusively within this locality and is uniquely positioned to understand the specific needs, barriers, and lived experiences of the community. The project model relies on hyper-local insight, trusted relationships with local health care providers, and place-based delivery rather than shared delivery across multiple GDN areas.

Outcomes, associated actions and success criteria

Details of the VCMA Project outcomes and the associated actions to achieve these, interim milestones and how the Funding Licensee will evaluate whether the project has been successful. Each action should have a proportion of the funding allocated.

Outcome	Project Target	Interim Milestones
Energy Triage	1,400	Quarterly performance – 175
CO Safety Information	1,400	Quarterly performance - 175
CO Alarm Provision	300	Quarterly performance – 38
PSR Conversations	1,400	Quarterly performance - 175
PSR Registration	600	Quarterly performance - 75
Energy Advice (across a number of energy advice measurable areas)	400	Quarterly performance – 50
Income Maximisation (across a number of income generating measurable areas)	120	Quarterly performance – 15
Billing / Meter Readings	400	Quarterly performance – 50
Wellbeing Support	1,000	Quarterly performance – 125
Scam Awareness	300	Quarterly performance – 38
Locking Cooker Valve Referral	50	Quarterly performance – 6
FRS Safe & Well Visit Referral	500	Quarterly performance – 63
Training (including CO, energy efficiency advice and front-line worker)	24	Quarterly performance – 3
Warm Spaces	60	Quarterly performance – 8

*Interim performance – averaged out and delivered with seasonal adjustments.

Success Criteria

The partnership will provide direct, in-person support to 1,400 carers across Kent, delivered through organised events hosted in local warm spaces. These sessions will offer practical advice, personalised guidance, and facilitated access to support services. As a result, carers and people living with dementia are expected to experience measurable improvements in their ability to maintain a safe and warm home, strengthen financial resilience, access key entitlements such as the PSR, and enhance their overall health and wellbeing.

Over the course of this two-year project, Alzheimer's Dementia Support Services (ADSS) will strengthen the safety, resilience, and wellbeing of carers by delivering coordinated, accessible support across multiple communication and engagement channels. Through a comprehensive digital outreach programme, ADSS will engage up to an additional 1,156 carers, who currently use their online platforms and targeted messaging to raise awareness of essential topics including Winter Preparedness, carbon monoxide (CO) safety, Priority Services Register (PSR) eligibility, energy efficiency advice, Locking Cooker Valve awareness, and guidance on financial vulnerability.

Potential for new learning

Provide details of what the GDN(s) expect(s) to learn and how the learning will be disseminated.

The impact of this project extends beyond direct support to carers in Kent, creating learning that can strengthen practice across our wider Safe & Warm partnership network and inform other community-based initiatives for unpaid carers as well as people living with dementia.

By bringing together local partners including carer organisations, voluntary sector groups, local authorities, health services, and energy specialists we have developed a shared, person-centred approach that recognises the complexity of caring roles and the need for flexible, accessible support.

This collaborative model has shown the value of coordinated local networks that can respond holistically to carers' needs, whether those relate to energy affordability, income, wellbeing, or the practical challenges of caring at home. The insights generated through delivery such as patterns of unmet need, barriers to benefit uptake, and the impact of tailored outreach will be shared with local stakeholders to inform service planning and improve outcomes for carers. We will continue to share the learnings via our local and regional partner events such as our Partner Spotlight sessions, our dedicated partner website pages and Partner Toolkit as well as through our annual vulnerability reports.

The project will also be independently assessed through a programme of qualitative and quantitative research with carers who receive support funded through the VCMA. This evaluation, delivered by a third-party organisation, will capture the lived experience of carers before and after receiving energy safeguarding support, enabling us to understand changes in confidence, financial resilience, access to entitlements, and overall wellbeing. By grounding the assessment in the voices of beneficiaries, we will build a robust evidence base on what works, where gaps remain, and how locally delivered, person-centred support can be strengthened. The findings will be shared across our partnership network and stakeholders.

The learning generated through this partnership will not only benefit Kent but also inform wider national discussions on how best to support people living with dementia and their carers. By demonstrating how early, place-based, dementia-sensitive energy support reduces risk and strengthens household resilience, ADSS will contribute valuable insights into strengthening support for unpaid carers,

improving safety and outcomes for people living with dementia, and reducing long-term pressure on the NHS and social care by addressing vulnerability earlier and more effectively. Together we will also highlight the importance of delivering interventions in trusted community settings where people are most likely to engage, positioning ADSS as a key contributor to national thinking on dementia, energy safeguarding, and carer support.

Aligning with and supporting wider vulnerability approaches

Details of how the project supports or aligns with approaches to vulnerability taken by the wider energy industry, other utilities and/or consumer organisations; local, national or devolved governments; or evidence innovation or a gap in vulnerability support provision. For example, this could include evidence of collaboration beyond the VCMA, non-VCMA joint funding of the initiative, or identified gaps in the provision of vulnerability services which the project seeks to address. The GDN should show how the project fits within broader approaches to vulnerability.

This carer focused approach aligns closely with wider vulnerability strategies across utilities, local authorities, and national policy frameworks by placing early identification, targeted support, and partnership led delivery at the centre of its model.

The project reflects the direction set out in the Fuel Poverty Strategy for England, which emphasises the need to identify households at greatest risk, improve access to advice and financial support, and strengthen cross sector collaboration to reduce fuel poverty. By proactively reaching unpaid carer who face disproportionately high rates of fuel poverty, digital exclusion, and barriers to accessing entitlements the project directly supports the national ambition to prioritise those most vulnerable to cold homes and rising energy costs.

The model also aligns with the principles of the Warm Homes Plan, which calls for locally delivered, person centred interventions that address both the financial and health impacts of living in an energy inefficient home. Carers often spend long hours at home, manage higher energy use due to medical or care needs, and face reduced income due to caring responsibilities. Providing tailored energy safeguarding support, benefit checks, and pathways into home improvements or energy efficiency schemes mirrors the Warm Homes Plan's focus on integrated, community-based solutions that reduce long-term pressure on health and social care services.

The project's emphasis on improving awareness and uptake of the Priority Services Register (PSR) also reflects wider utility sector commitments to strengthen protections for customers with additional needs. By embedding PSR conversations into community outreach, the project helps ensure carers and people living with dementia receive the additional safeguards they are entitled to, including communication support, priority restoration, and access to social tariffs where available.

This project creates a coordinated network capable of delivering holistic, person-centred support. This mirrors the multiagency collaboration encouraged across national vulnerability frameworks and demonstrates how local ecosystems can work together to improve outcomes for carers, strengthen resilience, and reduce avoidable demand on the NHS and social care.

Monitoring and evaluation

Details of how the GDNs will work with their project partners to monitor the impact of the VCMA project and evaluate its effectiveness and success.

ADSS and SGN will review monthly reports on measurable outcomes, working together to ensure successful delivery. Each quarter, the core project team will meet to share performance insights, highlight and mitigate any underperformance, and provide structured updates on delivery, risks and emerging outcomes.

Together we will ensure that there is an evidence base through audit and research that seeks to understand how effective the project is in supporting their local communities who are struggling to maintain a safe and warm home and assess the before and after to better understand the impact of the services provided on the lived experience of beneficiaries.

We will report annually on partnership impact, sharing broadly via our company-specific reports to showcase outcomes and key learnings and inform future delivery. Additionally, the learning will be shared across the GDN Vulnerability working group as well as disseminating results through SGN's business governance processes, including on request to our Independent Steering Group (ISG).

Scale of VCMA project and SROI calculations, including NPV

Justify the scale of the VCMA project – including the scale of the investment relative to its potential benefits. As part of this, the Funding Licensee(s) should provide the SROI calculation, including NPV. Note: The value in numbers of the SROI and NPV must be provided, rather than confirmation of positive impact.

Together as Gas Distribution Networks, we worked with leading social impact research consultancy SIRIO Strategies on the development of the Industry Standard Social Value Framework and supporting GDN Rulebook. We have used that GDN Rulebook to carry out an assessment of financial and wellbeing outcomes applicable to our services for vulnerable households included in this partnership.

We've incorporated social value based on the deliverables and associated targets detailed above. Carrying out an assessment of these predicted outcomes we forecast a positive net Social Return on Investment of £1.69 for every £1 spent.

Social value measurement

Total cost*	£99,453.27
Total gross present value	£267,803.71
Net Present Value (NPV)	£168,350.45
SROI	£1.69

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

Internal governance and project management evidence

Provide a description of GDN(s) review of proposal and project sign off, with details on how the project will be managed.

We worked closely with ADSS to co-design this partnership so that its ambition directly contributes to our Vulnerability Strategy, developed with support from our stakeholders including through our dedicated Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Steering Group and overseen by our Independent Steering Group. The PEA has been reviewed and approved through our internal governance processes and formally signed off as detailed below.

Approver (Name and Role)	Date
Kerry Potter, Group Social Impact & Vulnerability Manager	
Maureen McIntosh, Director of Customer Services	31/03/26

Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility Criteria	Description	Project qualifies Yes / No
Positive SROI	Have a positive, or a forecasted positive, Social Return on Investment (SROI) calculated in accordance with a model which the GDNs have developed and submitted to Ofgem including for the gas consumers funding the VCMA Project	Yes
Positive NPV	Have a positive, or a forecasted positive Net Present Value (NPV)	Yes
Support Criteria	Either: i. provide support to consumers in Vulnerable Situations and relate to Energy Safeguarding, or ii. provide support for those most at risk of being left behind in the transition to net zero, or iii. provide awareness of, and education on, the dangers of CO beyond the activities funded as business as usual (BAU) through baseline allowances, or iv. reduce the risk of harm caused by CO	Yes
Defined Outcomes	Have specific, measurable, and time-bound outcomes which align with relevant Consumer Vulnerability Strategy objectives to achieve the requirements set out in Support Criteria above;	Yes
Beyond Other Funding	Go beyond activities that are funded through other price control mechanism(s), including baseline allowance funding, or required through licence obligations	Yes
Support or Align	Support or align with approaches to vulnerability taken by the wider energy industry, other utilities and/or consumer organisations, and local, national and devolved government, or evidence innovation or a gap in vulnerability support provision;	Yes
No Other External Funding	Not be delivered through other external funding sources directly accessed by a GDN, including through other government (national, devolved or local) funding	Yes
BAU vulnerability and CO safety activities	Where a GDN's BAU vulnerability and CO safety activities are funded through baseline allowances, these are not suitable for funding through the VCMA. The GDN is permitted to use VCMA funds to supplement or complement its BAU activities, however, it must ensure that its reporting provides sufficient evidence to prevent double funding.	Yes

Eligibility criteria for company specific essential gas appliance servicing

Eligibility Criteria	Description	Project qualifies Yes / No or N/A
Servicing must meet the following criteria:	Either: i. A GDN has had to isolate and condemn an essential gas appliance following a supply interruption or as part of its emergency service role; or ii. A GDN or its Project Partner has identified an essential gas appliance which has not been serviced in the last 12 months in the owner-occupied home of a customer in a Vulnerable Situation where an occupier of the property suffers from a permanent or temporary health condition¹² that makes them more vulnerable to health risks associated with cold homes; or iii. A GDN or its Project Partner has identified an essential gas appliance which has not been serviced in the last 12 months in a tenant-occupied home of a customer in a Vulnerable Situation where it is the tenant's responsibility to maintain the essential gas appliance, where an occupier of the property suffers from a permanent or temporary health condition that makes them more vulnerable to health risks associated with cold homes	N/A
Affordability	The household cannot afford to service the essential gas appliance, as assessed against the affordability criteria set out in the VCMA governance document	N/A
Funding	Sufficient funding is not available from other sources (including a social or private landlord and national, devolved, or local government funding) to fund the essential gas appliance servicing	N/A

Eligibility criteria for company specific essential gas appliance repair and replacement

Eligibility Criteria	Description	Project qualifies Yes / No or N/A
Unsafe pipework and essential gas appliance repair or replacement must meet the following criteria:	Either: i. GDN has had to isolate and condemn unsafe pipework or an essential gas appliance following a supply interruption or as part of its emergency service role; or ii. A GDN or its Project Partner has had to condemn unsafe pipework, or an essential gas appliance, following an essential gas appliance service (as described in 3.19 of the VCMA governance document)	N/A
Health condition	Either: i. The occupier of the property suffers from a permanent or temporary health condition that makes them more vulnerable to health risks associated with cold homes and has a household income of £31,000 or below in 2025/26 prices, adjusted for inflation using Consumer Price Index with Housing costs (CPIH) 13, or ii. the household cannot afford to service the essential gas appliance, as assessed against the affordability criteria set out in Appendix 1 of the VCMA governance document	N/A
Funding	Sufficient funding is not available from other sources (including national, devolved, or local government funding) to fund the unsafe pipework or the essential gas appliance repair or replacement.	N/A