

VCMA Annual Showcase

Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)
Annual Showcase Report 2025



VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025

1 Welcome to the 2025 VCMA Annual Showcase3

2 Stakeholder engagement4

3 VCMA Strategic pillar sessions6

3.1 Session 1 - Services Beyond the Meter (SBtM)6

3.2 Session 2 – Fuel poverty and energy affordability.....8

3.3 Session 3 – Supporting priority customer groups.....12

3.4 Session 4 – Carbon monoxide (CO) awareness16

4 Ofgem reflections.....20

5 Looking to the future21

6 Q&A Panel Session24

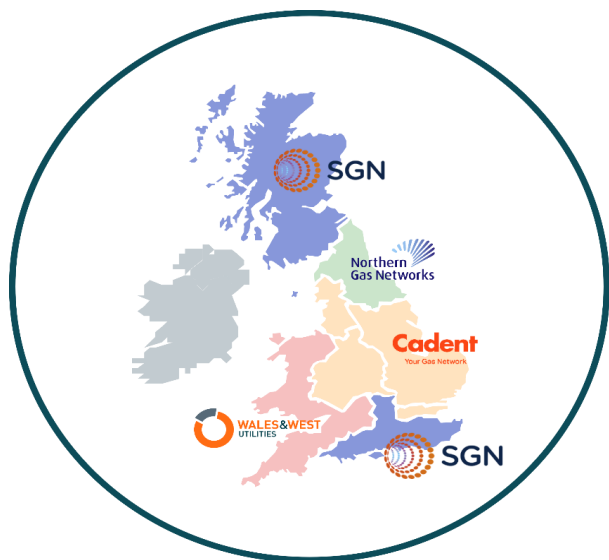
7 Stakeholder registration25

8 Stakeholder questions.....28

9 Stakeholder assessment of the VCMA Showcase 202539

10 Speaker biographies.....43

1 Welcome to the 2025 VCMA Annual Showcase



On 9 July 2025, Britain's four Gas Distribution Networks (GDNs) Cadent, Northern Gas Networks, SGN, and Wales & West Utilities came together to host the annual Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) Showcase following the publication of the [GDN Collaborative VCMA Annual Report](#).

This online event offered customers and stakeholders the opportunity to hear inspiring keynote speakers, take part in interactive sessions, learn and shape how the VCMA funding is helping to protect vulnerable customers and raise carbon monoxide awareness across Great Britain.

The annual VCMA Showcase is a cornerstone of our commitment to transparency and continuous improvement. It provides a platform to celebrate the positive outcomes achieved through the funding entrusted to us, share progress under our RIIO-GD2 consumer vulnerability strategies, and reflect on the lessons learned along the way.

Stakeholder engagement continues to play a vital role in shaping the ongoing journey of the VCMA. Feedback gathered from previous events including commentary and insights shared after last year's Annual Showcase has been instrumental to the shaping of the agenda and design of this year's showcase. In addition, a dedicated stakeholder working group collaborated closely with us to refine the event's focus and format, ensuring it remained relevant, engaging, and aligned with community needs. We are deeply grateful for the guidance and partnership of our stakeholders, whose contributions continue to make both the VCMA programme and the Annual Showcase more impactful for the communities we serve.

This year's VCMA Showcase was proudly hosted by SGN, bringing together stakeholders to reflect on collective progress and explore future opportunities for supporting vulnerable customers and promoting carbon monoxide awareness.

The event opened with keynote speeches from leading voices across the energy and customer support sectors, beginning with SGN's Chief Executive Officer, Simon Kilonback, followed by Adam Scorer, Chief Executive for National Energy Action (NEA).

Setting the intent for the day, Simon underscored the vital role that Gas Distribution Networks (GDNs) play within the communities we live and work in providing a 24/7 emergency service, maintaining over 280,000 km of gas pipelines, and supplying 21.6 million homes and 1 million businesses across Great Britain. He reaffirmed our shared commitment to deliver outstanding customer service for all of our customers whilst we support vulnerable households out of fuel poverty today, ensuring their needs remain central as we move towards a clean and inclusive energy future.

VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025

In his keynote address, Adam Scorer, Chief Executive of National Energy Action (NEA), reflected on the profound challenges still facing vulnerable households amid a shifting policy landscape and continued economic uncertainty. He highlighted how, despite wider changes in the energy sector, many families remain in enduring crisis struggling with rising costs, increasing debt, and limited access to essential support. Adam emphasised the critical role of the VCMA in addressing these challenges, noting three key strengths that underpin its impact: genuine collaboration between gas networks and community partners, the stability of multi-year funding that drives sustained progress, and the ability to reach those who are often excluded from mainstream national support frameworks.

We were privileged to be joined by several VCMA partners who shared their experiences and the real-life impact of these initiatives. Their powerful stories brought to life both the scale of the challenges faced by vulnerable communities and the tangible difference these programmes are making across the regions we serve.

2 Stakeholder engagement

We greatly value the contributions of our broad and diverse stakeholder community, recognising the vital role their insight plays in deepening the impact and reach of our services and enhancing the value delivered to the communities we serve.

This year, with the support of our strategic partners Citizens Advice, Citizens Advice Scotland, National Energy Action (NEA), other energy networks, existing VCMA partners, and our respective Industry Steering Groups (ISGs) and Innovation teams we sought to welcome new stakeholders to the VCMA Showcase. The event provided an opportunity not only to share best practice and learning from our current programmes but also to engage stakeholders in shaping our plans for the next price control period.

We were delighted to see 510 stakeholders register and of those who attended, 52% were joining us for the first time, 23% for the second time, and 26% have been engaged for two or more years demonstrating both growing interest and sustained engagement across our stakeholder network. A full list of participating organisations can be found [in section 7 of this report](#).

This year's event featured a series of collaborative engagement sessions exploring the four strategic pillars of our joint vulnerability strategy as well as open question and answer sessions expertly facilitated by Matt Copeland, Head of Policy and Public Affairs at NEA and a representative of SGN's ISG. Throughout the VCMA showcase Matt invited stakeholder feedback to be captured in real time using Slido.

Recognising the importance of accessible engagement, we expanded our provision this year to include British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters and live subtitles. These enhancements enabled us to welcome an even broader range of voices into the conversation, ensuring that all stakeholders could contribute on equal terms.

Introductory session

During the introductory session, stakeholders were invited to share information about the organisations they represent, their relationship with the Gas Distribution Networks (GDNs) and the VCMA Showcase, their perspectives on the current challenges facing energy customers and their view on the impact of the VCMA on customers in vulnerable situations to date. The outputs from these key questions are presented below, providing valuable insight into the views and experiences of our stakeholder community.

VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025

When asked to evaluate the statement “The VCMA has significantly improved the lives of customers in vulnerable situations through impactful projects and strong partnerships between Gas Distribution Networks (GDNs) and community partners,” **71% of respondents strongly agreed and 26% agreed, reflecting a combined 97% approval rate. Only 2% remained neutral, and no respondents disagreed.** This response highlights broad stakeholder confidence in the effectiveness of the VCMA framework and its delivery partnerships.

When asked, “What are the key challenges faced by the people you support right now?” stakeholders provided valuable insights into the ongoing pressures affecting vulnerable households. The most commonly identified challenges included the rising **cost of living, energy affordability, and fuel debt**, with many noting the cumulative impact these issues have on household wellbeing. Stakeholders also highlighted digital exclusion, mental health pressures, and the increasing complexity of individual needs as growing concerns. Several respondents emphasised that while awareness of available support has improved, many customers continue to experience barriers in accessing help, particularly those in rural areas, off-gas communities, or with language and communication needs. This feedback underscores the importance of continued collaboration and targeted outreach to ensure support reaches those most in need.

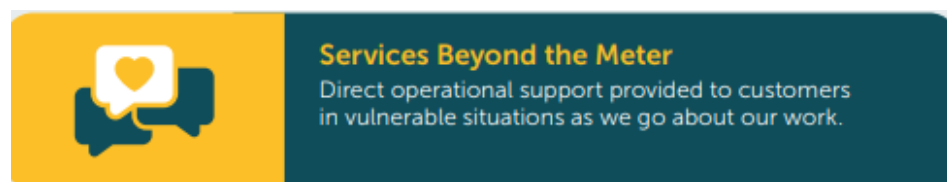
The word cloud below captures the feedback to the question ‘*What are the key challenges faced by the people you support right now?*’



3 VCMA Strategic pillar sessions

The following section is structured around the format of the Showcase event and explores each of the four key strategic pillars of the GDNs' joint vulnerability strategy. For each pillar, it provides a summary of the presentations delivered, highlights the outcomes achieved through funded projects for customers, and captures the valuable feedback and insights shared by stakeholders during the sessions.

3.1 Session 1 - Services Beyond the Meter (SBtM)



As gas distribution network operators, our core responsibilities include responding to gas emergencies, maintaining the safety and reliability of our networks, and managing customer connections and disconnections. In delivering these essential services, our frontline teams hold a unique position of trust and invited into customers' homes to help. This direct engagement allows our frontline teams to develop a deeper understanding of customers' circumstances and the confidence to offer support tailored to their individual needs.

To ensure we deliver the highest standard of service, we work closely with expert partners such as NSPCC and Scope so that our teams have the skills to identify and help our customers often beyond the gas engineering role. Together, the GDNs and their partners have developed enhanced training, standards, and procedures to help our teams identify and support vulnerable customers more effectively during home visits.

In the event of a gas emergency, our engineers isolate the gas supply if it is unsafe and take time to clearly explain the next steps to the customer. Where vulnerability prevents a customer from taking required actions, our team's step in to provide additional practical help, where eligible this can include the repair, replacement or servicing of gas pipework or essential gas appliances or onward referrals into partner or community customer safeguarding services.

During this session, hosted by Kerry Potter (SGN) and Kate Ravenscroft (Cadent) together with delivery leaders from Cadent and Wales & West Utilities (WWU) they provided an update on how the GDNs are collectively advancing this area of customer support. They outlined the key services offered and explained how collaboration under the governance of a new GDN working group is fostering shared best practice and the development of consistent service standards, supported by locally tailored delivery approaches.

The team also shared how over the last year together with Ofgem and stakeholder support the VCMA governance was updated to close a significant gap in available support. Many customers eligible for means-tested benefits were unable to access further assistance simply because they were not actively claiming those benefits. Stakeholder feedback gathered during last year's Showcase played a key role in highlighting this issue and shaping the changes required. As a result, since January 2025, we've been able to extend our reach and support significantly more customers through the scheme.

Two presentations were delivered as part of the session. The first, presented by Earl Richards, Technical Manager for Services Beyond the Meter at Cadent, guided stakeholders through the end-to-end process of how GDNs support eligible customers by funding emergency repairs to pipework and essential gas appliances.

The Services Beyond the Meter programme is a tailored service designed to support vulnerable customers, offering a wide range of interventions, including, appliance repairs and replacements, Carbon Monoxide and Carbon Dioxide Dwelling Atmosphere and Appliance testing (CMDDA1), Gas appliance safety checks and servicing and in-home products including carbon monoxide alarms and welfare packages during gas outages.

Key GD2 VCMA outputs – Services Beyond the Meter

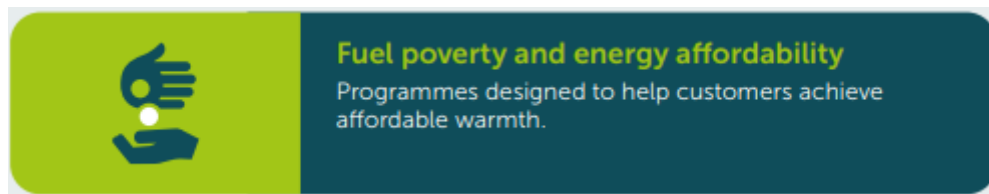
- £13.4m total VCMA funds invested
- 3 collaborative projects funded
- 1,765 essential gas appliances repaired
- 2,789 essential gas appliances replaced
- 8,217 carbon monoxide safety investigations

Following the facilitated engagement session, feedback was gathered from 165 delegates to capture views on the SBTM programme. **Most attendees (94%) agreed or strongly agreed that the GDNs are undertaking the right activities in this area, with 12% remaining neutral and only 1% expressing disagreement.**

The word cloud below captures the feedback from **103 stakeholders** who responded to the question ‘*What are the gaps (if any) in the activities we are undertaking in the area of Services Beyond the Meter?*’



3.2 Session 2 – Fuel poverty and energy affordability



Fuel poverty occurs when households spend a large portion of their income on fuel, leaving them unable to afford essentials or keep their homes warm. This issue is influenced by income, fuel costs and a home's energy efficiency. Our fuel poverty and energy affordability projects are designed to help customers achieve affordable warmth by providing tailored, targeted support for those most in need.

In recent years, the number of households facing fuel poverty within our network areas has risen sharply. The ongoing cost-of-living crisis continues to stretch household budgets and intensify the pressure on vulnerable customers. In response, we're evolving our programmes and strengthening partnerships to extend our reach and deepen our impact. Through tailored, holistic support, we aim to make a meaningful and lasting difference in people's lives.

This session, hosted by Kate Ravenscroft (Cadent) and Laura Ratcliffe (Northern Gas Networks), featured presentations from National Energy Action (NEA), IE Hub, Citizens Advice England and Wales, and Citizens Advice Scotland as we shared updates on projects that were at varying stages of delivery maturity.

Key GD2 VCMA outputs – Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability

April 2021 to March 2025

- £16.6m total VCMA collaborative funds invested
- 23 collaborative projects funded
- 1.9m households supported

Warm Homes, Healthy Futures - NEA

Dr. Danielle Butler, Head of Development at NEA, shared insights from our collaborative project Warm Homes, Healthy Futures, a key initiative addressing the critical link between health and energy that had just completed its first year in delivery. The project's health-focused initiatives are strategically aligned with national programmes such as Core20PLUS5 and NG6, ensuring our work supports wider health equality objectives.

Collaboration lies at the heart of Warm Homes, Healthy Futures. The initiative delivers support 'on prescription', working with health, housing, and trusted local partners to reach people with medical conditions who are living in or at risk of fuel poverty. While the programme is nationally coordinated, delivery takes place locally, with most referrals coming directly from NHS providers. As the programme has developed, several key learnings have emerged:

- The importance of ongoing dialogue and engagement, recognising that addressing the intersection of fuel poverty and health takes time, trust, and collaboration
- The strength of the programme's network of partners, showcasing the value of shared learning and collective growth
- The need for flexibility, ensuring local expertise and lived experience shape how support is delivered

VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025

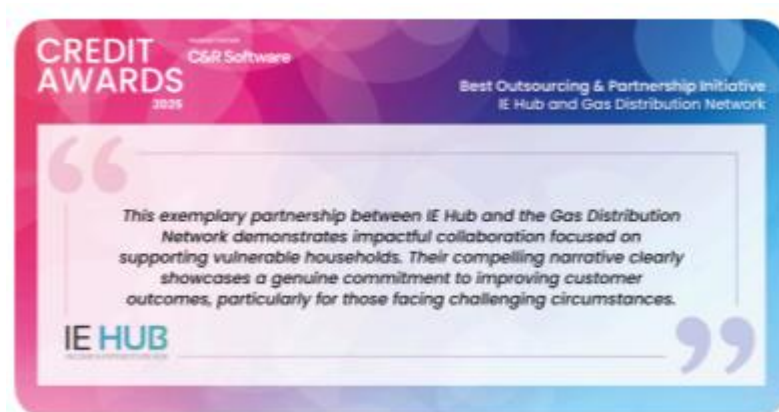
- The power of celebrating collaboration, reinforcing that partnership is central to achieving meaningful and sustainable outcomes.

To date, the project has delivered measurable, lasting results supporting over 5,000 people, training 500 frontline healthcare workers, and helping to unlock over £3 million in previously unclaimed benefits for vulnerable customers.

Money Management Tool – IE Hub

Bethanie Kennedy, Head of Partnerships at IE Hub shared an update on the progress of a new collaborative partnership which launched in August 2024. The partnership with IE Hub, a FinTech for Good organisation, is delivering significant impact for customers experiencing financial hardship. By using IE Hub's digital income and expenditure platform, households can easily understand their financial situation, share budget details with multiple service providers, and access tailored support reducing stress and improving financial wellbeing.

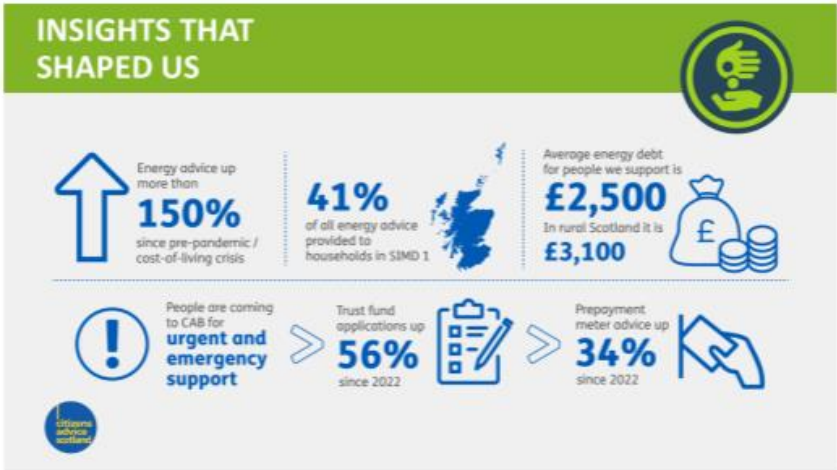
Following a successful pilot with Cadent, all four Gas Distribution Networks (GDNs) have collaborated on a joint VCMA-funded project that aims to support over 136,000 customers, identify more than 83,000 cases of unclaimed benefits, and create an estimated £432 million in additional annual household income, reaching at least 1.4 million customers overall. The initiative's success has also been recognised externally, with IE Hub winning the 'Best Outsourcing & Partnership Initiative' award at the Credit Awards 2025.



Key learnings highlight the value of digital innovation in promoting financial inclusion, the power of cross-sector collaboration, and the importance of accessible, customer-centred support models in improving household resilience and empowering customers to proactively manage their debt.

Citizens Advice (England and Wales) and Citizens Advice Scotland

David Hilferty, Director of Impact at Citizens Advice Scotland, and Colleen Pollard, Corporate Partnerships Lead for Energy at Citizens Advice (England and Wales), provided an update on the programmes delivered in partnership with the Gas Distribution Networks (GDNs) since the start of GD2. They highlighted how shared insight, experience, and close collaboration with the GDNs have enabled an agile and adaptive response to the evolving needs of energy customers in crisis.



What began in 2021 as a partnership between Citizens Advice Scotland and SGN and a collaborative project led by SGN on behalf of the GDNs with Citizens Advice in England and Wales is unified by a common goal to provide tailored energy advice and safeguarding support to the most vulnerable members of our communities, particularly in response to the ongoing cost-of-living challenges following the COVID-19 pandemic.

This cross-regional collaboration has strengthened knowledge sharing and enabled more data-led decision making. As the project has evolved, the combination of customer insight and VCMA funding has allowed us to dedicate additional resources to support households with complex needs. It has also supported the creation of locally focused outreach initiatives, such as Citizens Advice Scotland’s pilot programme delivering support to people in hospital settings ensuring assistance reaches those most in need.

Another significant development has been the expansion of carbon monoxide awareness training across the Citizens Advice network. Initially delivered only to staff working directly with GDN programmes, this training is now embedded within the organisation’s core staff induction and development programme, reinforcing a long-term commitment to keeping customers safe and informed.

Key outcomes and customer case studies were shared to illustrate the breadth and impact.



Stakeholder feedback

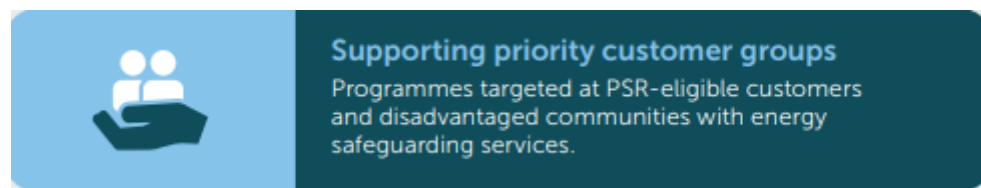
Following the facilitated engagement session, feedback was gathered from 144 delegates, to capture views on the Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability programme. **A majority of attendees 90% agreed or strongly agreed that the GDNs are undertaking the right activities to address fuel poverty and energy affordability, with 9% remaining neutral and only 1% expressing disagreement.** Similarly, **89% of stakeholders agreed that the GDNs are well placed to provide support in this area, 11% were neutral and no attendees disagreed** reflecting broad confidence in our approach and delivery.

When asked about the wider customer affordability landscape, **80% of participants felt the situation had worsened compared with the same time last year with 45% describing it as “slightly worse” and 35% as “much worse.” 4% reported any improvement.** This feedback highlights the deepening challenges faced by households as the cost of essential goods and services continues to rise. Stakeholders identified several key areas for further focus, including the need for sustained and increased funding, improved support for off-gas-grid customers, enhanced awareness and education initiatives, and more effective debt relief measures.

The word cloud below captures the feedback of **96 stakeholders** who responded to the question ‘*What are the gaps (if any) in the activities we are undertaking in the area of Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability?*’



3.3 Session 3 – Supporting priority customer groups



Some households and communities face greater challenges in maintaining a safe and warm home, particularly those with medical or communication needs who are eligible for the Priority Services Register (PSR). To address these challenges, we've developed a portfolio of programmes designed to provide PSR-eligible customers and disadvantaged communities with comprehensive energy safeguarding services.

We recognise that many priority customers are hesitant to discuss health or financial concerns with their energy suppliers or specialist advice agencies. By partnering with trusted community organisations, we're able to create safe, welcoming environments where customers feel comfortable seeking support. This trusted approach allows us to deliver solutions that are personalised, sensitive, and effective.

Our programmes are co-designed with expert community partners, drawing on collective experience and insight to shape initiatives that not only meet individual needs but also strengthen community connections and outreach.

This session, hosted by Sophie Shorney (Wales & West Utilities) and Kerry Potter (SGN), featured presentations from Kidney Care UK, Carers Trust, Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age UK. Each organisation shared updates on projects at various stages of delivery, highlighting innovative approaches to supporting priority customers and the impact being achieved across different GDN regions.

Key GD2 VCMA outputs – Supporting Priority Customer Groups

April 2021 to March 2025

- £10.4m total VCMA collaborative funds invested
- 11 collaborative projects funded
- 5.9m households supported

Kidney Care UK

Sarah Oakley, Director of Patient Services at Kidney Care UK, shared how the charity is partnering with the GDNs to deliver life-changing energy and financial support for over 17,000 dialysis patients. Since 2023, the joint-GDN programme has provided face-to-face assistance across 128 renal units nationwide, alongside phone and digital support services. Designed to be available *"at the right time,"* the service offers holistic support that reduces the "hand-off" experience patients often face, enhancing continuity of care while easing pressure on healthcare professionals. The programme has achieved widespread success, now active in more than 100 renal units with over 1,500 healthcare professionals engaged and helping over 9,330 patients access over £2.6 million in welfare benefits to date.

Sarah emphasised the power of Kidney Care UK's national presence in fostering cross-sector collaboration between health, energy, and charity partners. She also reflected on key lessons learned notably the

VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025

importance of recruiting the right people to deliver compassionate, high-quality support, and recognising that lasting outcomes often stem from sustained, repeat engagement with patients.

Carers Trust

Tanya Sealey, Programme Lead for Carer Money Matters at Carers Trust, shared progress from the first year of this collaborative project, co-designed to improve the wellbeing and access to energy safeguarding services for unpaid carers across all four GDN regions. Building on learning from a previous WWU initiative, the programme uses a decentralised, community-based model delivered through 22 partner organisations, focusing on areas of high deprivation.

To date, Carers Trust has supported over 10,000 carers, with further expansion planned through deeper engagement with local and national partners and targeted outreach campaigns. A key insight from early delivery highlighted the importance of local, flexible approaches to meet carers' unique needs. Network partners have since embedded core processes such as carbon monoxide and PSR awareness conversations, ensuring carers receive effective and relevant support.

Beyond direct assistance, the project has had broader influence — with carers representing the network at a parliamentary event, sharing their experiences of poverty with 40 MPs and helping to inform social policy.

While successfully breaking down barriers between carers and support services, the project continues to navigate challenges related to scaling delivery, regional logistics, and addressing complex needs such as language barriers and digital exclusion. Key learnings include adopting a holistic “right support at the right time” approach, prioritising income maximisation first, followed by tailored energy efficiency advice.

Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age UK

Gavin Thomas, Head of Programmes and Services at Age Cymru, Scott Stewart, Head of Information, Advice & Friendship at Age Scotland, and Cat Gowers, Corporate Partnerships Manager at Age UK, presented on the progress of this long-standing partnership, which has evolved and strengthened throughout GD2.

Originally launched in 2021 as a pilot between SGN and Age Scotland to help older people stay safe and warm at home, the programme's success led to its expansion in 2022 into a national partnership with Age Cymru, Age UK, and the other three GDNs. Today, it stands as a model of cross-sector collaboration, underpinned by shared learning and local adaptation.

Delivery varies across GB, with each partner tailoring its approach to reflect organisational capacity and legislative frameworks. The project provides a range of vital services, including a dedicated advice line offering triage and tailored support to older people struggling to maintain a safe and warm home. It also shares accessible energy efficiency and safety resources, both online and in print, such as an interactive benefits calculator that helps users identify and access financial support.

Co-designing the programme around each charity's strengths has been key to its success, enabling swift mobilisation and effective local delivery. This collaborative model has enhanced the collective capability of both the GDNs and charity partners to support older people more effectively. As the partnership has matured, so too has the quality and depth of delivery reflecting the benefits of sustained investment in relationships, shared expertise, and continuous learning. However, many older people continue to face complex challenges. Energy rationing, social isolation, and reduced confidence following the COVID-19 pandemic remain pressing

VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025

issues. Digital exclusion, rising living costs, and fixed incomes further compound these difficulties, while changing regional legislation on CO safety adds another layer of complexity. Recent adjustments to the winter fuel allowance have also intensified financial strain for vulnerable households, making this partnership’s work even more crucial. To date we’ve been able to support 384,194 older people identify unclaimed benefits to help increase their household income and assist 5,798 eligible households join up to the PSR.

Stakeholder feedback

Following the facilitated engagement session, feedback was gathered from 104 delegates to capture stakeholder views on the Supporting Priority Customer Group programmes. **An overwhelming 94% of attendees agreed or strongly agreed that the GDNs are undertaking the right activities to support priority customers, 6% selecting neutral, with no disagreement** recorded reflecting strong endorsement of current efforts.

Encouragingly, awareness of the Priority Services Register (PSR) among eligible customers was seen to have improved, with 93% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that awareness has increased as a result of GDN and partner initiatives.

Participants identified several key areas for further improvement, including the need to increase awareness of available support, address language barriers, provide longer-term assistance, enhance outreach to rural communities, and strengthen the sector’s influence on policy.

Stakeholders also suggested additional customer groups that should be prioritised in future programmes, including the working poor, off-grid customers, care leavers, single-parent families, and rural communities.

The word cloud below captures the feedback of **61 stakeholders** who responded to the question ‘*What are the gaps (if any) in the activities we are undertaking in the area of supporting priority customer groups?*’

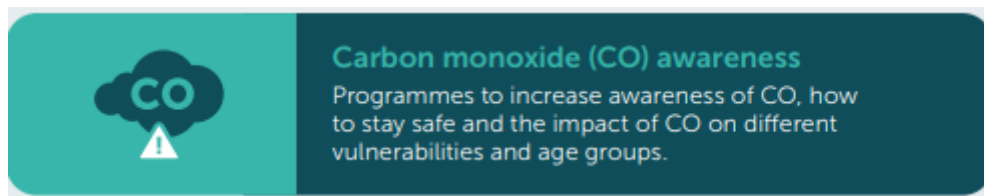


VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025

The word cloud below captures the feedback of **77 stakeholders** who responded to the question ***'Are there any priority customer groups we should support in the future?'***



3.4 Session 4 – Carbon monoxide (CO) awareness



The final strategic area session was hosted by Laura Ratcliffe (Northern Gas Networks) and Paisley Henderson (Wales & West Utilities). They were joined by representatives from the GDNs as well as iPiP, Egnida and Scouts, organisations delivering projects at varying stages of maturity, each showcasing valuable learning that has shaped their development.

Our carbon monoxide (CO) awareness programmes are co-designed by the GDNs to ensure consistent, clear messaging reaches audiences nationwide through innovative engagement channels and strong community partnerships and are overseen by the GDN CO Working Group, a long-standing working group which is joined by external stakeholders from FireAngel Project Shout, Gas Safe Register and CO Research Trust. These initiatives are dedicated to reducing the risks and potential harm associated with CO exposure.

Importantly, CO awareness is embedded across all VCMA-funded projects, including those delivered by partners with little previous experience in this area. By working closely with key stakeholders, expert organisations, and policymakers, we continue to strengthen campaigns, enhance public understanding, and drive sustained behavioural change, particularly among vulnerable households, helping to prevent incidents and save lives.

Key GD2 VCMA outputs – Carbon monoxide awareness

April 2021 to March 2025

- £4.9m total VCMA collaborative funds invested
- 6 dedicated CO collaborative projects funded
- 120 million people reached through carbon monoxide messaging
- 75,000 lifesaving carbon monoxide alarms provided including accessible alarms

Improving Performance in Practice (iPiP)

The first presentation showcased a project led by Suzanne Callington (Cadent) on behalf of the GDNs and Rachel Harrison the Project Coordinator from iPiP, which is focused on reducing the risks of environmental carbon monoxide (CO) exposure during pregnancy. It highlights how collaboration across the gas networks, CO Research Trust and health partners is building an evidence-based approach to safeguarding maternal health.

The iPiP health team has completed a literature review on the harms of CO exposure in pregnancy and ways to prevent it and has progressed to developing and testing a UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) algorithm and an eLearning for Health (ELFH) module. Ongoing evaluation of care pathways with maternity services and Fire and Rescue Service partners is helping to embed these findings into practice.

Working with NHS England and professional bodies, the team has created ELFH modules that equip health and social care staff to understand CO harm, spot sources and at-risk individuals, recognise symptoms, assess risks and take appropriate action in CO-related cases. The CO ELFH module is currently in pilot, with wider rollout

VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025

planned for autumn 2025. If implemented at scale, the proposed policies are expected to reach an estimated 382,934 people with CO information, including around 300,000 via maternity services, 17,000 health visitors and 67,000 people over 75.

Egnida Innovation

The second presentation was delivered by James Perry, Director at Egnida Innovation, who shared learning from a targeted carbon monoxide (CO) awareness project aimed at students a traditionally harder-to-reach audience. The campaign used augmented reality (AR) via bespoke drinks coasters in campus coffee shops at four universities (Cardiff, Birmingham, Sunderland and Edinburgh), with an ambition to engage 200–400 students at each site. Students access the AR experience by scanning a QR code on the coaster with their phone, triggering an interactive 3D CO awareness module on the table in front of them. Those who complete the experience receive a discount code for the hosting coffee shop, designed to encourage participation and reward engagement.

While completion rates are high among those who start the AR training, overall engagement has been lower than expected. To improve uptake, the project team tested several refinements, including placing coasters in more locations, increasing voucher value and directly handing coasters to students. (image below of coaster)



Analysis of the results has produced several important insights. Location has a strong impact on participation, with notably higher engagement in Cardiff than in Birmingham, prompting further investigation into local factors and campus culture. Rapid advances in artificial intelligence and the rise of platforms like TikTok suggest that the novelty of AR is fading and younger audiences are less responsive to polished, “professional” formats and traditional incentives such as free coffee.

The project concludes that to remain relevant and effective with student audiences, campaigns must innovate faster and align more closely with emerging digital behaviours and preferences. This includes rethinking incentive structures, experimenting with more informal or creator-style content, and continuously adapting engagement strategies as technology and audience expectations evolve.

VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025

Scouts

The final presentation was delivered by Emily Lasney-Duffy, Corporate Partnership Lead at the Scouts, and Kathy O'Brien, Head of Corporate Partnerships. It showcased a long-standing partnership that has evolved over four years, moving beyond carbon monoxide (CO) awareness to deliver engaging, skills-based programmes leveraging the strengths of all partners and the Scouts' active community.

With over 800 leaders completing the new CO eLearning package, and more than 825,454 young people taking part in CO awareness activities, the partnership has now launched energy efficiency programmes reaching nearly 36,000 young people at a critical time as more families struggle with household costs.

As the UK's largest youth movement, engaging over 450,000 young people from diverse backgrounds, the Scouts provide an ideal environment for the GDNs to deliver safety and wellbeing messages through fun, hands-on learning.

The programme began with the Cubs' Home Safety Badge in partnership and has since expanded to 11 CO safety activities tailored to the needs and interests of young people across the four Scouting sections. CO education also extends to adult volunteers, with a Gas Safe Charity-supported eLearning module teaching them to identify CO risks in homes, meeting places and campsites, and respond effectively to suspected poisoning cases.

In response to the cost-of-living crisis, the collaboration has broadened into GDN vulnerability, capability, mitigation and awareness (VCMA) priorities, using playful activities to tackle fuel poverty and energy affordability. Examples include making DIY draught excluders, building camping washing lines and running experiments with different fuels to promote energy efficiency, warmth and safety.

Stakeholder feedback

Following the facilitated engagement session, feedback was gathered from 110 delegates to capture stakeholder views on the Carbon Monoxide awareness programmes. **Most, 88% agree or strongly agree that we are focusing on the right carbon monoxide (CO) awareness activities, with only 3% disagreeing.**

On partnership working, **77% feel we are collaborating with the right organisations on CO safety, while almost a quarter are neutral and just 1% disagree.** In terms of overall awareness increasing across our stakeholder and partnership community, **77% report increased awareness of CO within their organisations or among the people they support, although 6% say they have not noticed any change.**

The word cloud below highlights the potential gaps, including the opportunity for more outreach to people who are camping, children and young people, vulnerable customers, closer collaboration with the Department for Education, and better access to CO alarms.

A word cloud visualization of the data from the survey. The words are arranged in a circular pattern, with the most frequent words in the center and less frequent words towards the periphery. The words are in various shades of blue and green. The central word is "camping". Other prominent words include "vulnerable people", "young people", "greater access to alarms", "schools", "young adults", "children", "DofE", "awareness", "park homes", "rural households", "off grid holidays", "travellers", "community", "new generation", "rural", "students", "non-poverty households", "reaching young people", "the availability of free co alarms", "sailing", "severity", "young", "inaccurate info", "media", "travelling", "households", "free travel co alarms", "access to free monitors", "children (not just scouts)", "young adults", "schools", "children", "DofE", "awareness", "park homes", "rural households", "off grid holidays", "travellers", "community", "new generation", "rural", "students", "non-poverty households", "reaching young people", "the availability of free co alarms", "sailing", "severity", "young", "inaccurate info", "media", "travelling", "households", "free travel co alarms", "access to free monitors", "children (not just scouts)".

[illegible]

4 Ofgem reflections

Following the GDN presentations, David McCrone, Head of Price Control Operations Policy at Ofgem, provided an insightful reflection on Ofgem's role in shaping the Voluntary and Community Measures Allowance (VCMA) from its inception through the RIIO-GD2 period and into its evolution for GD3.

Opening with a reminder of Ofgem's purpose as Great Britain's independent energy regulator, David emphasised the organisation's ongoing commitment to protecting energy consumers, particularly those who are most vulnerable. He highlighted how Ofgem's partnership with the GDNs has been central to ensuring that regulatory frameworks not only drive efficiency and innovation but also deliver tangible social value.

Reflecting on GD2, David acknowledged the transformative impact of collaboration across the networks, noting that £45.6 million in joint VCMA projects had supported over 1.5 million individuals, increased carbon monoxide awareness, and boosted the Priority Services Register (PSR) with households who were eligible but not benefiting from the service. These achievements, he noted, exemplify how coordinated, purpose-driven investment can achieve far greater outcomes than individual efforts alone.

He also recognised the adaptability demonstrated throughout GD2, with mechanisms such as the reallocation of unspent FPNES funds and refinements to the emergency repair and replacement of essential gas appliances allowing GDNs and Ofgem to respond flexibly to changing circumstances and customer needs.

Looking ahead to GD3, David outlined Ofgem's intention to build on GD2's successes with a proposed £165 million in VCMA funding and a continued emphasis on collaborative, outcome-led initiatives. Embedding key vulnerability and carbon monoxide awareness activities into business-as-usual operations will provide long-term stability and enable networks to focus resources where they have the greatest impact.

He concluded with a perspective on affordability and value, stressing that effective, well-targeted support delivers more enduring benefits for families, communities, and the sector than marginal reductions in energy bills.

In closing, David reinforced Ofgem's commitment to strengthened partnerships, strategic investment, and consumer-focused regulation. Through these efforts, Ofgem aims to ensure the sector continues to deliver meaningful, lasting change for energy consumers across the UK.

5 Looking to the future

Maureen McIntosh, Director of Customer Service at SGN, opened the *Looking to the Future* session with a powerful reflection on the importance of collaboration between our regulator, Ofgem, the GDNs, and our valued community partners. She emphasised how this united approach has been essential during a period when energy customers across the UK have faced unprecedented challenges in accessing safe and affordable warmth. She highlighted the depth of integration with local community organisations and how four years of collaboration between GDNs, stakeholders, and community partners have shaped our approach to the next price control period. Key highlights included:

- 483 partners delivering 989 projects across the GDNs, reflecting the dedication and commitment of our teams and community partners to transforming lives and strengthening communities.
- The establishment of a strong collaborative foundation that goes beyond licence obligations, embedding excellent customer service at the heart of everything we do. Supporting our communities is now part of our DNA, ensuring every customer enjoys a safe, warm, affordable, and efficient home.
- A clear demonstration of our values through outstanding customer service performance, particularly for customers on the Priority Services Register (PSR), and through the extra care services we proactively offer to those who need additional support.
- The transformational impact of strengthening our partner network, enabling us to reach and support people more effectively — from direct action by our teams to the vital work of organisations such as the SPFL Trust, Age Scotland, and the Gas Safe Charity.
- Ongoing collaboration that allows us to share best practice, drive continuous improvement, and expand our reach to even more communities.

As we finalise our GD3 plans with Ofgem, Maureen McIntosh reflected on how the successes of GD2, delivering innovative services and a unified approach across areas of customer support have provided a strong foundation for the future. She introduced the new GDN Collaborative Vulnerability Strategy for GD3, which will guide our joint efforts over the next five years. This strategy has been shaped through extensive stakeholder engagement and will continue to evolve through ongoing collaboration, ensuring we remain responsive to community needs amid challenges such as the cost-of-living crisis. Key developments in GD3 include:

- The transition of some key services and core carbon monoxide and PSR awareness programmes into business-as-usual operations, reaffirming our commitment to supporting vulnerable customers through employee training, dedicated frontline resources, customer welfare, provision of CO alarms, as well as extra safety checks for eligible customers where carbon monoxide is suspected and we have isolated gas supplies for safety reasons.
- A focus on the challenges of decarbonisation and the journey to net zero, ensuring that this transition is inclusive, equitable, and leaves no one behind. Proactive community engagement will remain central, empowering vulnerable customers to access support and build resilience for a sustainable future.

Maureen closed the session by thanking stakeholders and partners for their unwavering commitment to supporting vulnerable customers. She reaffirmed that collaboration, shared learning, and collective action remain at the heart of our success. Together, we continue to improve lives today while building a lasting, positive legacy for the communities we serve.

A focus on the future – stakeholder feedback

The word cloud below captures the feedback of **79 stakeholders** who responded to the question ‘*What other things should we be focusing on for the next few years?*’



The word cloud below captures the feedback of **100 stakeholders** who responded to the question ‘*What are the top three challenges you anticipate the people you support with face over the next five years?*’



VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025

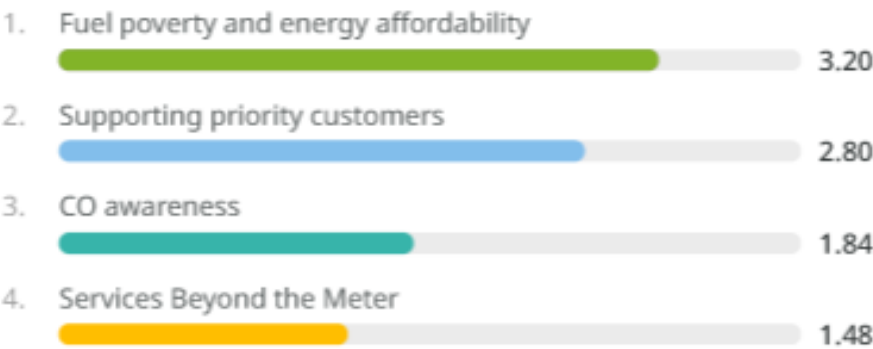
The word cloud below captures the feedback of **91 stakeholders** who responded to the question *‘What are your organisations priorities for the next five years?’*



The word cloud below captures the feedback of **78 stakeholders** who responded to the question *‘Are there any focus areas that we haven’t mentioned that you feel will be important over the next five years?’*



We asked our stakeholders how our strategic priorities aligned to theirs by asking them to rank them in order of importance. 113 stakeholders responded resulting in the following ranking.



VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025

And finally, we asked our stakeholders to reflect on what sets the VCMA apart from other support schemes, the word cloud below captured the feedback from the question **‘What do you think differentiates the VCMA scheme from other initiatives designed to support vulnerable customers?’**



6 Q&A Panel Session

The final session of the VCMA Annual Showcase was facilitated by Matt Copeland and brought together senior leaders from National Energy Action (NEA), Ofgem, and the four Gas Distribution Networks (GDNs). Designed as an interactive panel discussion, the session offered stakeholders an opportunity to engage directly with industry leaders, explore key learning from the GD2 period, and discuss priorities for the future direction of the Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide (VCMA) within the evolving regulatory frameworks.

The panel featured:

- Adam Scorer, Chief Executive, National Energy Action (NEA)
- David McCrone, Head of ED2 Quality of Service, Outputs and Incentives, Ofgem
- Phil Burrows, Head of Customer Vulnerability, Cadent
- Eileen Brown, Customer Experience Director, Northern Gas Networks (NGN)
- Maureen McIntosh, Customer Service Director, SGN
- Nigel Winnan, Social Programme Manager, Wales & West Utilities (WWU)

Throughout the discussion, the panel reflected on the impact the VCMA has delivered across GD2, the lessons learned through cross-industry collaboration, and how shared insight is informing the approach to GD3. A strong theme emerged around the value of partnership not only between GDNs and Ofgem but also with community organisations and stakeholders in driving innovation, accountability, and meaningful outcomes for customers in vulnerable situations.

Stakeholders were invited to ask questions about priorities within the forthcoming regulatory period, particularly regarding balancing affordability, maintaining strong social outcomes, and embedding vulnerability support within business-as-usual operations. The session reinforced a collective commitment to continuous improvement and to ensuring the VCMA continues to evolve to meet the changing needs of customers and communities across Great Britain.

7 Stakeholder registration

The following list details the 197 different organisations that registered to participate in this year's Showcase.

Organisations attended	Organisations attended
A&K Community Hub	Aberdeen Citizens Advice Bureau
A&K Football Education Community Club CIC	ACE
Action Hampshire	Age Concern Tyneside South
ADSS	Age Cymru
Age Scotland	Age UK
Alzheimer's Society	Arun and Chichester Citizens Advice
Auriga Services	Back of The Moss Community Centre
Bangor Street Community Centre	BCHC Direct Access to Wellbeing Service
Beat the Cold	Bield
Birmingham Voluntary Service Council (BVSC)	Blackpool Coastal Housing
Blackpool Council	Bonanza Creative
Brandwalk Ltd	Brandwood Centre
Brighton and Hove City Council	British Heart Foundation
Bullion Community and Resource Centre	Care and Repair Cymru
Carents Room	Carer Support Wiltshire
Carers Outreach Service	Carers Support East Kent
Carers Trust	Caribbean & African Health Network
Centre for Sustainable Energy	Changeworks
Charis Grants	CHAS Children's Hospices Across Scotland
Cheshire West Voluntary Action	Children First
Children's Radio UK Ltd	Citizens Advice
Citizens Advice 1066	Citizens Advice - East Dorset and Purbeck
Citizens Advice – Hampshire	Citizens Advice – Manchester
Citizens Advice – Newcastle	Citizens Advice – Northumberland
Citizens Advice – Rushmoor	Citizens Advice Scotland
Citizens Advice – Telford and the Wrekin	Citizens Advice – West Northants and Cherwell
Claremont Park Community Centre	Communitas Energy CIC
Community Action Northumberland	Community Energy Pathways
Community Energy Plus	Compas Charity
Coram's Fields	Create Clarity Ltd

VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025

Crime Reduction Enterprise	Crisis
Croydon Mencap	Cruse Bereavement Support
DeafPlus	Deeplish Community Centre Association
Digital Kent	Dorset and Wiltshire FRS
East Kent Mencap	Egnida Innovation Ltd
Electricity North West	Energy Action Scotland
Energy Projects Plus	Energy System Catapult
Evouchers Ltd	Family Action
Fazakerley Community Federation	Flashy Wings Ministry
Gas Safe Charity	Getting Better Together
Glasgow North West Citizens Advice Bureau	Glasgow Northwest Citizens Advice Bureau
GNWCAB	Greener Kirkcaldy
Groundwork Greater Manchester	Groundwork UK
Groundwork Yorkshire	Hamilton Citizens Advice Bureau
Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland	Highfield food CO-OP
Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council	Home-Start UK & Home Start Cymru
Hyde Bangladesh welfare association	Hope4U
IE Hub	iPiP
IncomeMax	Independent Age
Involve Leeds	Kidney Care UK
Kestrix Ltd	Lightning Reach
Leicestershire County Council	Lifeskills Learning for Living
Local Services 2 You	Magic Breakfast
Maggies Cancer Care	MyBnk
Make Life Better	Marie Curie
Mental Health Innovations	Mental Health UK
Mentone Energy Consultancy Ltd	MS Society
National Energy Foundation (NEF)	National Energy Action (NEA)
NSPCC	New Wortley Community Centre
North Warwickshire Citizens Advice	North-East Windhill Community Association
Northern Cancer Voices	OVO Energy
Pembrokeshire FRAME	Partnerships for Good
Policy Connect	Pioneering Care Centre
Renfrewshire Citizen's Advice Bureau	RCC (Leicestershire & Rutland)

VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025

Royal British Legion	Repowering London
Ridgewater Energy	Royal Association for Deaf People (RAD)
Sapphire	Sandon House Community Centre
SCOPE	SCARF
Shelter	Scottish and Southern Energy Networks (SEEN)
Shiney Advice and Resource Project (ShARP)	Shelter Cymru
SIA Partners	Shrewsbury & Oswestry Crucial Crew
Small Acts of Kindness	Skills 4 Work Gateshead
SELCE South East London Community Energy	SmellTaste
South Seeds	South Lanarkshire Council
South Tyneside Council	South Tees NHS Foundation Trust
SP Energy Networks	Sovereign Network Group
St Helens Council	SPFL Trust
St John Ambulance	St James Centre
Suffolk FRS	Sue Ryder
SWALE Community and Voluntary Services	Surrey County Council
Swindon Borough Council	The Farming Community Network
The Centre	The Health and Social Care Alliance
The Footprint Trust	The Peoples Pantry
The Hope Foundation	The Princess Royal Trust for Carers
The Play Centre (Glasgow)	The Social Brokers
The Rainbow Centre	The Wise Group
The Source	Third Sector Leaders
The Wishing Well Project Ltd	TMW Unlimited
Three Hands	Trussell
Together for Short Lives	Utilita
United Utilities	VOCAL Carers
Unity	Waltham Forest Community Hub
Wallsend Memorial Hall and People Centre	Warmworks
Warm Wales	Wesley Hall Community Centre
Welfare Together Ltd	West Lothian Citizens Advice Bureau
West Kent Housing Association	Worthing Mencap
West Midlands FRS	YES Energy Solutions
UK Power Networks	YMCA Wales

8 Stakeholder questions

Throughout the VCMA Showcase, stakeholders were encouraged to submit questions, which were addressed during dedicated Q&A sessions. Many were answered live by the host GDNs, session presenters, and senior leaders, with additional contributions from Ofgem representatives. The list below captures the remaining questions submitted via Slido that could not be addressed on the day, reflecting the depth of engagement and interest from our stakeholder community.

Stakeholder Question	GDN response	Theme
What's the best way to engage with other GDNs now that we have a successful service with some of them?	The simplest way to connect with other GDNs is through the one you're already partnered with. Ask your current GDN contact to introduce you to the appropriate colleagues in the other networks. We work closely together and are always happy to facilitate connections where successful services can be shared or scaled to benefit more communities.	General
Will the video recording be available as a recording after the presentations?	We won't be sharing the video no, instead we'll share a report that provides a summary of each presentation as well as the Q&A responses.	General
How do you decide which community partners to invest in?	The approach to selecting community partners varies slightly across the GDNs, but decisions are always guided by identified community needs and the ability of organisations to deliver meaningful support to targeted groups. We prioritise partners who can reach those most in need or add specialist expertise to our existing programmes. In addition, all GDNs welcome proposals from prospective partners, which are carefully assessed against both these priorities and the VCMA governance criteria to ensure projects deliver genuine social value and meet regulatory requirements.	General
Is there a register of the 483 partners?	Not as such, but all project details are published on each GDN's individual websites and listed within their company specific and collaborative annual VCMA reports which are also on their websites. There you will find all the partners that GDNs are working with through VCMA.	General
VCMA funding has delivered huge amounts of Social Value to the most deprived communities across GB - is there more the GDN's should be doing to promote it?	All the GDNs work closely with their communications teams to share the impact of our VCMA-funded projects, always with care to protect the privacy and dignity of the people we support. Our goal isn't to generate customers or brand loyalty, but to raise awareness, promote collaboration, and encourage shared learning across the sector.	General

VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025

	By showcasing what's working well, we help other organisations identify opportunities to partner, replicate best practice, and ultimately extend support to even more communities. We're always exploring new and appropriate ways to highlight this important work and the social value it delivers.	
Is there a partnership portal where we can access resources mentioned e.g. leaflets, today's videos, training etc. Also a list of all the services you offer?	There isn't currently a single partnership portal, but each GDN has its own engagement channels for partners and stakeholders. The best way to access resources such as leaflets, videos, training materials, or details of available services is to contact the GDN operating in your area, who can share what's available locally. You can also visit the individual GDN websites, which are a good starting point for information and materials.	General
Would you be able to deliver a gas safe or energy advice session for our community centre users, particularly older or vulnerable adults?	Please contact the GDN operating in your area. Many GDNs can arrange Gas Safety or energy advice sessions, particularly for older or vulnerable residents, either directly or in partnership with trusted local organisations.	Services Beyond the Meter
How can you refer clients into Services Beyond the Meter?	If you contact your regional GDN they'll guide you as this will be different for each GDN.	Services Beyond the Meter
Is it possible to offer a boiler service for customer who cannot afford one?	Boiler servicing for vulnerable customers can be provided via a number of schemes, for customers who own their homes it is worth checking if they are eligible for a gas safety check via their energy provider as part of the PSR services or contact your regional GDN for guidance.	Services Beyond the Meter
What is the time scale from referral to replace or repair of an essential gas appliance?	Once eligibility has been confirmed this will depend on the complexity of the work required. On average the team are on site within 24 hours.	Services Beyond the Meter
Does Cadent have a leaflet about PSR registration, carbon monoxide and services beyond the meter?	In addition to the information available on the Cadent website, they do have leaflets and literature on the above topics and wider services available to vulnerable customers for project partners, for info please contact box.CustomerSafeguarding@cadentgas.com	Services Beyond the Meter – Cadent
Jenny Wood representing charity CO-Gas Safety. Would be very grateful for contact with Glenn Thorne to discuss the testing pilot in more detail.	You're welcome to reach out via our VCMA inbox (VCMA@wwutilities.co.uk), and we'll connect you with Glenn to continue the conversation.	Services Beyond the Meter – WWU

VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025

Regarding the Beyond the Meter services, can engineers refer customers to other services or explain available help from local charities for broader issues?	The Services Beyond the Meter processes are quite holistic across all GDNs and will incorporate discussions at various stages about accessing other support from local charities and the GDNs network of partners.	Services Beyond the Meter
Are all customers provided with a carbon monoxide alarm when they have had a call out?	All GDNs have processes where they can provide customers with access to carbon monoxide alarms should the customer need one or can not afford to purchase one.	Services Beyond the Meter
Can people at risk of an emergency be referred in?	The number to call in the UK for gas emergencies is 0800 111 999. This number is the National Gas Emergency Service hotline and should be contacted if you smell gas, suspect a gas leak, or are worried about carbon monoxide exposure. It is a free, 24-hour service.	Services Beyond the Meter
Are all new PSR registered customer offered an alarm / have current one checked?	Our frontline teams will assess when on site. Together with our community partners we take a customer centred approach and where it's identified that the customer requires an alarm then this is offered.	Services Beyond the Meter
Is there agreement among GDNs, Ofgem, NEA, and delivery partners on a modern benchmark for annual household energy costs as 'affordable'?	There isn't a single agreed benchmark for affordable household energy costs, but GDNs, Ofgem, NEA, and delivery partners share common principles around energy affordability. Rather than setting a fixed figure, affordability is understood in relation to household income, energy efficiency, and access to support.	Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability
As households fit heat pumps and disconnect gas, GDN costs will be spread across fewer customers, including those most vulnerable. How will Ofgem/GDNs help?	Ofgem and the GDNs recognise the fairness challenges as potentially gas use declines and the costs are spread across fewer customers. This is an active area of stakeholder consultation to ensure that future charging arrangements remain fair and equitable. Both the regulator and networks are committed to protecting vulnerable households through a just transition maintaining essential services, supporting affordability, and ensuring no one is left behind as the energy system evolves.	Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability
How can the IE Hub compliment local advice services rather than compete with them?	IE Hub is an online platform designed to complement, not compete with the valuable services delivered locally. Tools like IE Hub offer customers effective self-help options, enabling them to manage their circumstances more independently. However, we fully recognise that face-to-face, frontline support continues to play a vital role in meeting the needs of our most vulnerable customers.	Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability

VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025

Is there appetite for two-way referrals into GDNs & VCMA partners and back to trusted community groups so support follows trusted relationships, vs signposting?	Yes there is strong appetite for two-way referrals between GDNs, VCMA partners, and trusted community organisations. We're open to discussions around both inbound and outbound referrals, recognising that collaboration helps ensure support follows existing trusted relationships. This approach goes beyond simple signposting, enabling a more seamless experience for customers and ensuring help reaches those who need it most.	Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability
How do we refer to Citizens Advice? My local office has had to close, users of another charity I work with have difficulty getting consultations.	Citizens Advice have a contact us page citizensadvice.org.uk on their website where you can find the nearest local office using a postcode search. The same page also provides an online chat service for key services including debt, energy and general advice.	Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability
What role can GDNs play in supporting funded organisations help clients through the energy transition, so that they benefit from decarbonised heating and power?	GDNs work closely with partners and community organisations to raise awareness of the energy transition and its impact on customers, particularly those facing financial challenges. We actively engage with senior stakeholders to ensure vulnerable households are advocated for and not left behind or adversely impacted in the green energy transition. We also work with others to assess eligibility so that the most vulnerable get access to financial schemes designed to help harder to heat homes. (HES, Warm Wales)	Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability
What challenges have you found in multiagency collaboration?	Collaboration is central to how GDNs reach parts of our communities, particularly those we might not otherwise encounter through our core operations. While challenges can arise for example, aligning data-sharing practices, consistent reporting frameworks or clarifying roles across different organisations these are relatively minor compared to the benefits. Working together enables us to extend our reach, share expertise, and deliver more coordinated and effective support for customers who need it most.	Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability
Which energy-related services have older people responded to most strongly?	Recently, older people have responded most strongly to services and support related to the removal and reintroduction of the Winter Fuel Payment, as this has had a direct impact on their	Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability

VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025

	ability to afford heating. These changes have heightened awareness and concern around household energy costs, prompting increased engagement with advice, support schemes, and community programmes focused on keeping homes warm and safe.	
SGN supports both experts in Energy Advice and those who have excellent reach into vulnerable communities. Any plans to enable formal partnerships between these?	SGN actively connects partners who are experts in energy advice with those who have strong links to vulnerable communities. This collaboration happens both formally through established partnership programmes and informally through our regional and SGN wide networking events, which create opportunities for direct cross-referrals and shared learning. Our Partnership Managers play a key role in facilitating these regional connections, hosting events that bring organisations together to strengthen local support networks. If you're interested in exploring new partnership opportunities or referral pathways, please reach out to your SGN Partnership Manager, who will be happy to help you connect with others in your region.	Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability – SGN
Why are Electricity prices linked to Gas prices, when huge areas of Scotland do not have mains gas, forcing excruciating high electric heating bills?	While GDNs don't have a role in setting or regulating energy prices as this sits with the wholesale market and Ofgem's price controls we recognise how the link between gas and electricity pricing can disproportionately impact off-gas communities, especially in rural parts of Scotland. Through our VCMA partnerships and collaborative work with community organisations, we're helping customers reduce energy costs by improving efficiency, offering safety and energy advice, and supporting access to available funding and schemes. We continue to share insight from these communities with Ofgem, government, and stakeholders to help shape fairer future policies and ensure no one is left behind in the transition to a low-carbon energy system.	Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability – SGN
Do you believe that the projects delivered and audiences that you currently reach are representative	As a GDN, much of our work takes place in response to emergency situations or during essential	Priority Customer Groups

VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025

of the communities you serve in BAU. If not, why?	maintenance across the communities we serve. Through this core activity, and especially through our partnership working, we've identified that some customers are not fully aware of the risks associated with gas safety. Our community partners often help us engage with these groups for example, households facing language or cultural barriers, extreme affordability challenges, mental health issues, and hoarding behaviours. These partnerships have been invaluable in helping us reach people who might otherwise fall outside of traditional engagement routes.	
How are you ensuring you are diversifying the charities and marketing agencies that you work with, in order to reach marginalised communities?	We're committed to reaching a diverse range of communities by continuously expanding the charities and agencies we work with. Through stakeholder feedback, collaboration across the GDNs, and independent assessments of local needs, we identify where our support can have the greatest impact. By partnering with organisations that have the expertise, cultural understanding, and trusted relationships needed to engage marginalised groups, we ensure our programmes are inclusive, accessible, and effective. This remains a central priority for the VCMA.	Priority Customer Groups
Residents who purchase utilities from a landlord cannot register with PSR. An example is elderly Park Home owners across Scotland. How can this be resolved?	There is a challenge in registering park homes onto the PSR as the data is held at MPRN / MPAN level. This means that records of properties that are fed from beyond this point have no network data point to be registered and no way of being data transferred between companies using the industry transfer methods. This is a challenge that is understood by Ofgem and the sector working groups. All companies however provide support services during works to customers who require them based on need which includes park homes.	Priority Customer Groups - SGN
Do all Fire services offer free CO monitors to vulnerable clients?	Most fire services provide CO alarms via their Home Fire Safety Visits, often these have been provided through partnership with their regional GDN. There may be some areas where this is not the case	Carbon Monoxide

VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025

	though as some services do not have the capacity to do this.	
I've been offered free CO awareness training for my organisation, but there aren't many dates available. Is there a possibility of on demand, e-learning?	Think CO do also offer e-learning that can be completed at any time. If you email elarning@gassafecharity.org.uk you can request access for yourself and others in your organisation. They just need a list of names and email addresses of those needing the training.	Carbon Monoxide
It seems that great resources have been developed through the Scouts programme. Is there a plan to leverage the Scouts' work and learning in schools?	All GDNs have an active Schools education programme where we or our partners deliver in school half day interactive CO education sessions. These are aimed at pupils aged 5 - 16.	Carbon Monoxide
Do GDN's work with rangers who operate in National Parks who may come across wild campers?	This isn't something we currently do, we'd be interested in exploring this though. Please share any connections you have with your GDN.	Carbon Monoxide
Are there plans to scale the augmented reality to more universities?	We don't currently have plans to expand the Augmented Reality programme to additional universities. While the initiative provided valuable learning, we encountered some challenges, and the technology has evolved significantly since it was first introduced. Instead, we're focusing our carbon monoxide (CO) awareness efforts through other channels that better reach university-age audiences. This includes targeted social media campaigns highlighting CO safety in rented accommodation and raising awareness of risks linked to recreational activities such as camping, festivals, and the use of barbecues or portable gas stoves.	Carbon Monoxide
Does the panel have any thoughts about how to prevent CO poisoning in non-permanent dwellings, such as garages, sheds, and caravans?	Raising awareness remains the most effective way to help prevent carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning in non-permanent dwellings such as garages, sheds, and caravans. Our campaigns consistently highlight the dangers of using portable gas heaters, solid fuel appliances, or generators in enclosed spaces, emphasising that even short-term use can be extremely dangerous. We also believe this message could be strengthened through greater	Carbon Monoxide

VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025

	collaboration with manufacturers and retailers — for example, by featuring clearer safety warnings and CO guidance at the point of sale of portable appliances. Together, these actions can help ensure that safety messages reach people before they're exposed to risk.	
Do you supply ppm found in writing to the occupant?	Where a full CMDDA1 investigation is carried out if PPM is found then this is supplied to the customer.	Carbon Monoxide
Can you please confirm that when you say you identify CO, are you testing all appliances/homes you visit, not just those where there have been visual signs?	No, we do not test every appliance in every home we visit. When we talk about identifying CO, this includes: 1) Activated CO alarms, reports of CO symptoms, or concerns raised by the household 2) Visual checks of appliances, flues and ventilation for signs that CO could be present 3) Any other evidence on site that suggests a potential CO risk. If there is any suspicion that CO may be present, our priority is to make the situation safe, including isolating the gas supply where appropriate in line with our role as the National Gas Emergency Service. For eligible households, we then arrange a follow-up CO investigation (CMDDA1), either through our own teams or trusted partners, to determine whether CO is present and what further action is needed.	Carbon Monoxide
And if an engineer PAM or a FGA detects a 'low' level? what is the criteria for progressing to a full CMDDA1 investigation?	If an engineer's personal alarm monitor (PAM) or flue gas analyser (FGA) detects CO at any level, it is treated as suspected carbon monoxide and the priority is to make the situation safe by isolating the gas supply where appropriate. The engineer will then assess whether the household meets the eligibility criteria for further support and, where it does, refer the case to in-house teams or trusted partners to carry out a full CMDDA1 investigation to determine the source and extent of any CO.	Carbon Monoxide
As well as raising awareness of CO risks/impacts, is it time to widen the remit to include other hazardous indoor air pollutants, e.g. PM's, VOC's, NO2 etc?	CO is linked closely to our core role as the National Gas Emergency service and is something that Ofgem provides us with funding through the VCMA to raise awareness of due to the fact it poses an immediate risk to life. Particulate Matter, Volatile Organic Compounds and Nitrogen Dioxide all fall outside of our core responsibility and into the broader clean air	Carbon Monoxide

VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025

	strategy piece. We do sometimes incorporate more clean air messaging where relevant such as certain innovation projects, but it's not something we'd incorporate into our large-scale CO messaging at this time.	
What role can energy advisors and community centres play in raising awareness and educating the public about carbon monoxide safety?	Energy advisors and community centres are excellent avenues into educating people on CO safety as they are engaging large numbers of households, on a daily basis. With our holistic approach to supporting customers we look to embed CO safety into all our partnerships, be that expert energy advisors providing in-depth at home advice and support, or community centres providing high level energy safeguarding information to visitors.	Carbon Monoxide
Can we create a space for advisors to discuss advice techniques around CO, as it's challenging to focus on this when bigger issues dominate?	The GDNs play an active role in connecting partners and their advisors to discuss the support they provide, including CO advice. These connections are fostered through local and national networking events, as well as online collaboration opportunities. By building these relationships, partners and advisors can share learning and best practices, ensuring that CO advice remains a priority even when addressing broader, more complex issues.	Carbon Monoxide
How can we expand support to those living with sensory loss/who cannot engage with 'regular' CO alarms?	Most of the GDNs also provide accessible CO alarms with Strobe lights and vibrating pillow pads either directly to customers or through their partners to support those with hearing loss. We do also have an innovation project currently running. We've just kicked off phase two which will create a prototype of a control unit to link with CO and fire alarms, this control unit supports multiple accessibility needs by providing verbal warnings, linking with mobile apps, linking with digital telecare systems, and other accessibility features. We're hoping to fully develop this into a device that will become available in shops and online in the future.	Carbon Monoxide
SROI often doesn't show the actual work BTS. How do projects better show challenges/what they're	We completely recognise that Social Return on Investment (SROI) figures don't always capture the full story or the real challenges faced on the ground.	Social Value

VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025

actually dealing with on the ground, rather than just numbers?	To address this, GDNs work closely with partners to gather case studies, personal stories, and qualitative insights that highlight the human impact behind the numbers. Our teams also visit projects and meet delivery partners to see the work first-hand. This helps us better understand both the successes and the challenges, ensuring that our learning and future investment reflects the realities within the communities we serve.	
Is there a clear outline available of how the SROI is calculated for potential VCMA projects, so collaborators can make sure their projects fit the criteria?	There is a clear framework for how SROI is considered for VCMA projects, but it sits within a wider co-design process rather than as a standalone “tick-box” test. Projects are developed collaboratively with partners, shaping activities and outcomes in line with each GDN’s vulnerability strategy and the VCMA governance requirements, including the common SROI approach set out in the VCMA governance document and GDN PEA templates. In practice, this means starting with the customer outcomes the GDN and its partners want to achieve, then mapping these to agreed proxy measures (for example income maximisation, PSR registrations, CO awareness and avoided harm) so that the forecast SROI can be modelled consistently.	Social Value
Can someone share the link to the consultation document please?	This information was shared during the event. Here’s the link to all Ofgem Energy network RIIO-GD3 publications Ofgem RIIO3	GD3
Are you pleased with Ofgem’s initial funding proposal for GD3?	Yes, overall the GDNs are pleased with Ofgem’s initial funding proposal for GD3, and it is seen as a very positive signal. It reflects confidence in how the GDNs have delivered for customers under GD2, the social value created through VCMA activity, and the strong alignment with stakeholder expectations around vulnerability, CO safety and wider community support. It also reinforces a shared commitment between GDNs and Ofgem to continue investing in targeted, high-impact programmes that focus on those who need support most.	GD3
David you mention 25% ringfencing for collaborative projects in GD3. Do you envisage the brilliant Warm	This project would sit within the VCMA portfolio and not baseline funding.	GD3

VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025

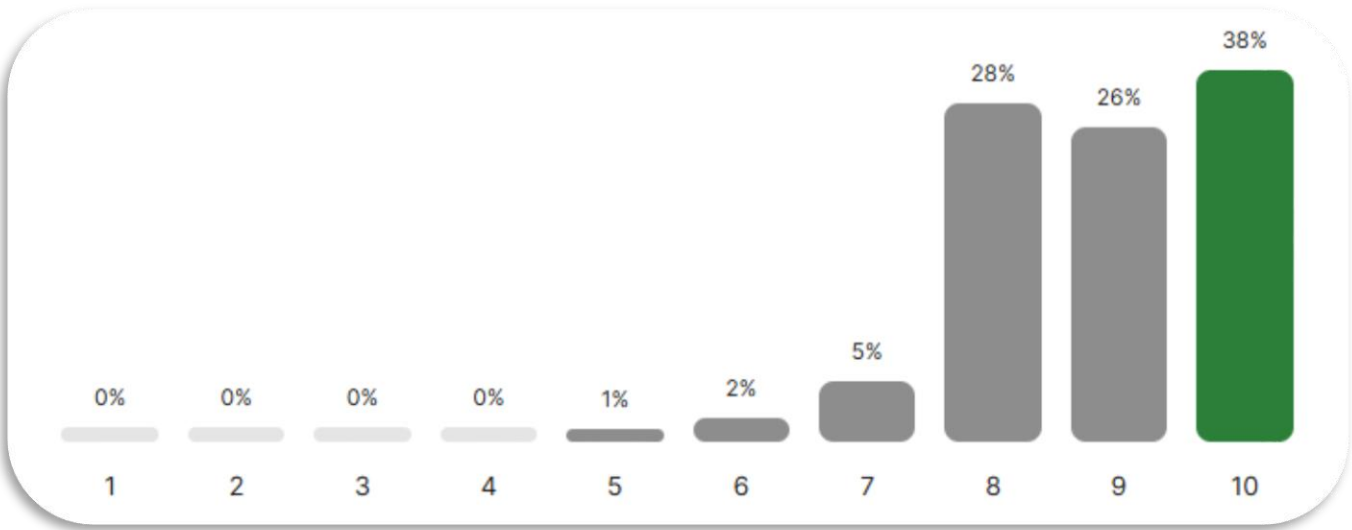
Homes Healthy Futures becoming part of baseline funding?		
In the current proposal, there is an indication that GDN's BAU funds are being boosted outside of the VCMA fund ... what does this mean for VCMA partners?	GDNs are still working with Ofgem through ongoing working groups to understand the detail of the BAU funding/activities, and to maximise the impact of this change in the next business plan period.	GD3
Less funding to split over 5 years than the last 2 years. How will GDNs determine which of the existing programmes they will partially or fully support?	We fully recognise the challenge, and we are currently taking time to look at the detail of the next funding award. All the projects are valuable, and we will take a careful, strategic approach when looking at projects for GD3.	GD3
Will SGN be making a commitment to continue to fund the Safe and Warm service in Scotland ensuring customers in rural areas get energy support and CO awareness?	At the moment we can't answer questions about specific projects as we're still taking time to look at the detail of the next funding award. All our projects are so valuable and we need to approach this strategically.	GD3 – SGN

9 Stakeholder assessment of the VCMA Showcase 2025

The 2025 VCMA Showcase was widely praised by attendees for its informative content, inclusive delivery, and professional execution. Delegates appreciated the opportunity to hear from a broad range of speakers and projects, with many highlighting the event’s value in showcasing the impact of VCMA-funded initiatives. We saw an improvement on the previous year’s stakeholder overall average performance of 8.5. to 8.9.

Overall satisfaction with the event - average 8.9

Stakeholders were asked to score the quality of the overall event and provide feedback on what went well and what could be improved upon.



What went well:

- Accessibility - High praise for BSL interpretation and subtitles
- Content quality - Many commented the event informative, well-organised, and technically smooth.
- Collaboration – Many commented and appreciated the diverse speakers and real project examples.
- Engagement - The polls and voting were seen as a good way to engage.
- Event flexibility – Having a clear agenda meant that they could opt in or out of sessions.
- The event was described as engaging, educational, and well-presented.

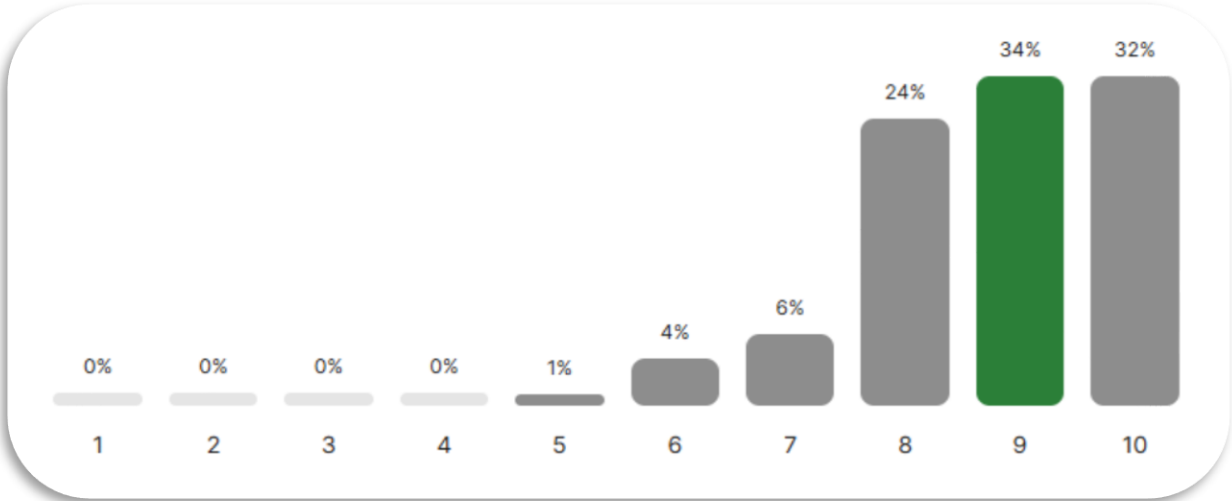
Suggestions for improvement:

- Event length: concerns raised about event length and screen fatigue.
- Breaks: requests for longer or more frequent breaks.
- Interactivity: suggestions for more Q&A time, interactive chat, and breakout discussions.
- Structure: some felt the Q&A and the panel discussions could be more focused.

VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025

Event content 8.9

Stakeholders were asked to provide feedback on the quality of the event content and the quality of the event speakers and provide feedback on what went well and what could be improved upon. We saw an improvement on the previous VCMA Annual Showcase from 8.68 to 8.9.



What went well:

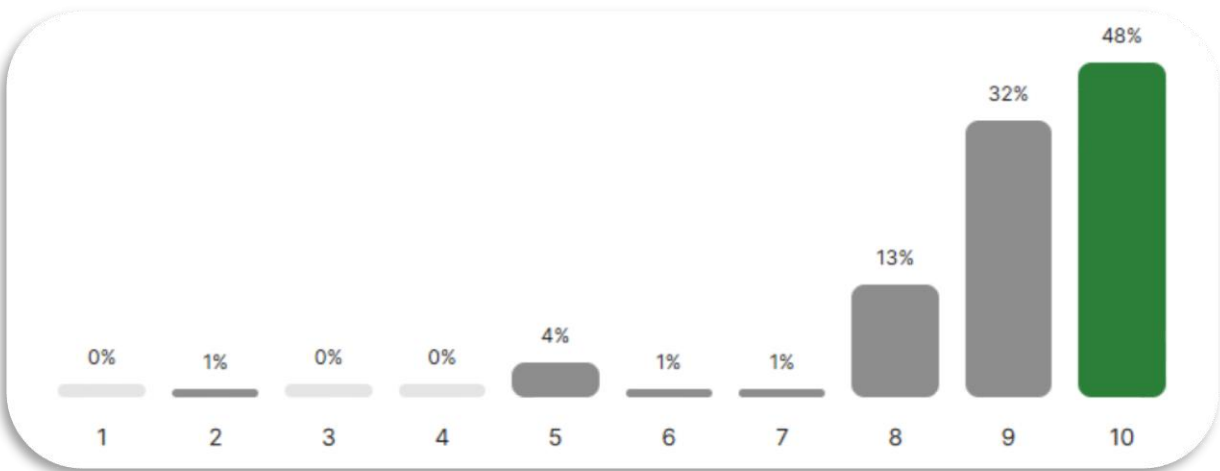
- Strong appreciation for the content quality, fast pace, variety of speakers and collaborative spirit.
- Valued diverse topics and alignment to strategic areas of focus
- Attendees valued real-world stories, sector experience, and project insights.

Suggestions for Improvement:

- Desire for more emphasis on the “how” rather than just the “what”—i.e., how outcomes were achieved.
- Suggestions to reduce formal presentations in favour of Q&A and panel discussions.

Event speakers 9.1

This year we saw an increase in the score for the quality of event speakers from 8.5 to 9.1.



VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025

Topics covered

Stakeholders were satisfied with the quality of the topics covered.

What went well:



- Strong interest in future plans for VCMA funds and what has already been achieved.
- Appreciation for learning about different pillars, projects, and partners.
- Value placed on diverse topics like climate change, decarbonisation, and gas grid transition.
- Attendees liked the flexibility of the online format and the relevance of topics to their work.
- Recognition of the impact of VCMA-funded work, especially in areas like vulnerable customer safety.

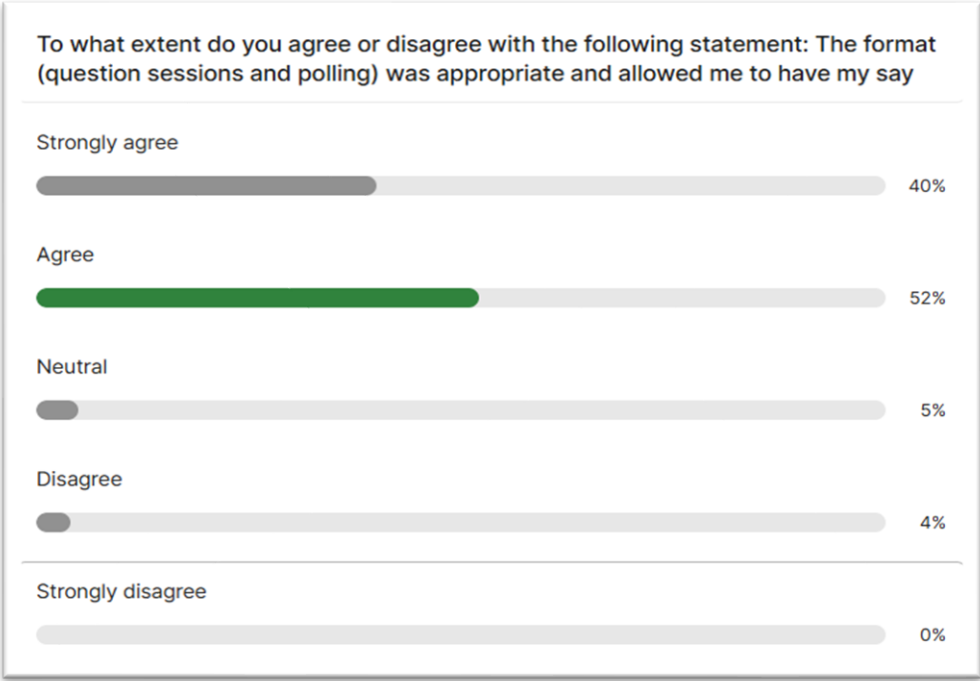
Suggestions for Improvement:

- A recurring theme: shift focus from outcomes to how projects were delivered.
- Preference for discussion/Q&A formats over long presentations.
- Desire for more information on funding and inclusion of topics like energy theft.

VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025

Event engagement

Stakeholders were asked to provide feedback on the quality of engagement and the feedback saw a small improvement on the previous year’s feedback with 92% positive responses, an improvement on 87% in 2024.



What went well:

- The platform was described as easy to use, slick, inclusive, and well-integrated.
- Slido integration was praised for its simplicity and interactivity.
- Many appreciated the live polling, word clouds, and smooth Zoom experience.
- Accessibility features like sign language and on-screen text were well received.

Suggestions for improvement:

- A few attendees experienced technical issues accessing Slido.
- There was feedback that the polls were repetitive and restrictive
- There was a recommendation for text chat functionality to replicate in-person conversations
- There were recommendations to consider breakout rooms and more Q&A time
- There was a recommendation to consider a hybrid event next time

10 Speaker biographies



Simon Kilonback
Chief Executive Officer,
SGN

Simon has over 25 years' experience in senior finance roles, particularly in infrastructure and utility businesses. In December 2024, Simon was appointed CEO of SGN after serving as the company's CFO since September 2023.

Prior to joining SGN, he was the CFO of Transport for London (TfL) for five years, where he brought TfL to the point of financial sustainability from a £1.5 billion operating deficit pre-Covid. He has also held a number of senior finance roles at G.Network, Lloyds Banking Group, HBOS, WHSmith and Sony.



Adam Scorer
Chief Executive,
National Energy Action

Adam is Chief Executive of National Energy Action (NEA). He has been a consumer rights campaigner for many years including at Which?, energywatch, Consumer Focus and Citizens Advice.

As a consumer advocate, he has been a member of numerous advisory boards and committees from civil aviation to insurance fraud. Fuel poverty and consumer vulnerability have been a focus throughout his career and Adam was appointed Chief Executive at NEA in December 2017.



Matt Copeland
Head of Policy and Public Affairs, National
Energy Action / SGN Independent
Stakeholder Group Member

Matt is the Head of Policy and Public Affairs at National Energy Action (NEA), having worked there for over six years. He has led NEA's work to ensure that they move towards net zero in a fair and affordable manner, helping to secure key commitments in the Government's manifesto towards warm homes. His work to ensure that the energy market results in affordable energy for low-income households has included advocacy throughout the current energy crisis, ensuring that financial support reaches the most vulnerable. Prior to NEA, Matt worked as a Policy Manager at EON, where he worked on issues across the spectrum, including retail market regulation, renewables markets and electricity network price controls. He has a bachelor's degree from Durham University in Natural Sciences.



Kerry Potter
Group Social Impact and Vulnerability
Manager, SGN

Kerry has been in the utilities industry for 26 years, driving sector-leading customer experience and vulnerability programmes that deliver measurable outcomes for customers, especially those in vulnerable circumstances.

She joined SGN in 2020 as the Group Social Impact and Vulnerability Manager, taking a lead role on the strategic leadership of SGN's Vulnerability Strategy. Key areas of responsibility include operational vulnerability engagement, the delivery of SGN's social obligations and commitments linked to the Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance portfolio, maximising social impact through direct and partner service delivery.



Kate Ravenscroft
Stakeholder Specialist – National Projects,
Sustainability & Social Purpose, Cadent

Kate joined Cadent in November 2022. Initially supporting a special project in the Future of Gas team before moving to the VCMA team in September 2023. Kate focuses on national and collaborative projects and chairs the Gas Distribution Networks' Fuel Poverty and Consumer Vulnerability Working Group.

With a background in B2B marketing communications, Kate has represented Cadent and the work of the VCMA team at national and local level. She has been responsible for the establishment and management of two innovative ecosystem projects on carbon monoxide (CO) awareness and fuel poverty.



Earl Richards
Eng. Tech MIGEM, Technical Manager,
Cadent

Earl began his career as a gas engineer specialising in installation, service and repair and has worked for Cadent (formerly National Grid) since 2010. His journey within Cadent has seen him excel in different areas across smart metering, hydrogen conversion and downstream operations.

Earl chairs the newly formed Gas Distribution Networks' Services Beyond the Meter collaboration group, working with the other gas networks to share best practice in the delivery of CMDDA1 investigations (CO safety checks) and appliance repair, replacement and proactive servicing works to support customers in vulnerable situations.

VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025



Glenn Thorne
Compliance First Line Manager,
Wales & West Utilities

Glenn has over 30 years' service in the gas industry, starting his career as an apprentice and subsequently an engineer for British Gas. Glenn quickly progressed to area operations manager for Emergency Metering Services in the Southwest of England, spending several years within this role before moving to his current position.

Glenn supports many metering and downstream projects as a Subject Matter Expert, utilising his vast experience and expertise within this field. Glenn takes great pride in his work and delivers a fantastic service for both internal and external customers.



Laura Ratcliffe
Social Strategy Programme Manager,
Northern Gas Networks

Laura has many years' experience working with vulnerable groups, having started as a volunteer before working within the voluntary sector for over 15 years.

Laura worked within a wide range of support settings before joining NGN from Citizens Advice in 2022. Laura is responsible for the delivery of NGN's vulnerability strategy and her previous experience has equipped her well to understand and respond to the needs of customers in vulnerable situations.



Dr Danielle Butler
Head of Development,
National Energy Action

Danielle is Head of Development at UK Fuel Poverty Charity National Energy Action. She holds a PhD in Social Policy and is Trustee of the Fuel Poverty Research Network.

Danielle has more than a decade of experience working across research, policy, and project delivery to support people to live in warm, safe, and healthy homes, and currently leads the Warm Homes, Healthy Futures programme: a network of services connecting health and social care with energy advice and support.



Bethanie Kennedy
Head of Partnerships,
IE Hub

Bethanie is the Head of Partnerships at IE Hub, where she brings a fresh perspective to fintech through a deep-rooted passion for people.

With eight years in the water industry, Bethanie has become a trusted advocate for affordability and supporting customers in vulnerable circumstances. Her work bridges the gap between innovation and empathy - ensuring that financial technology doesn't just evolve but includes everyone along the way.



David Hilferty
Director of Impact,
Citizens Advice Scotland

David joined Citizens Advice Scotland as Strategic Lead for Social Justice in October 2022, moving from a role in the Scottish Government's Directorate for International Trade and Investment.

Prior to that, David was Deputy CEO at Money Advice Scotland where he led on the design and delivery of the organisation's strategic plan.



Colleen Pollard
Corporate Partnerships Lead - Energy,
Citizens Advice

Colleen is an experienced partnerships and fundraising leader at Citizens Advice, with a strong track record in securing multi-million-pound support across the energy and charitable sectors.

She leads strategic relationships with major UK corporates, aligning ESG and CSR goals with high-impact programmes that tackle poverty, vulnerability, and energy affordability. Known for driving income growth, navigating complex stakeholder landscapes, and delivering results in fast-paced environments, she's passionate about unlocking unrestricted income and building partnerships that create lasting social value.

VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025



Sophie Shorney
VCMA Manager,
Wales & West Utilities

Sophie is the Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) Manager at Wales & West Utilities (WWU). A University of South Wales graduate, she has over 12 years of experience in the gas industry, specialising in Customer Management, Vulnerability, and Social Obligations.

She leads the VCMA Team, overseeing project coordinators and administrators managing company-specific and collaborative initiatives. Sophie plays an active role in the industry, representing WWU in various working groups, where she attends, represents and contributes to key discussions. Her leadership helps drive impactful projects that support vulnerable communities across the sector.



Sarah Oakley
Director of Patient Support Services,
Kidney Care UK

Sarah leads Patient Support Services to provide personalised and individual support to anyone affected by the challenges of living with kidney disease.

Sarah has worked in the third sector for more than ten years, bringing skills and experience from a career in marketing and applying them to providing valued services for people living with chronic health conditions.

She has worked across a broad portfolio of services including helpline provision, advice and guidance, peer support and specialist psychosocial services. She follows with interest technological developments influencing service delivery but remains firmly committed to keeping the personal experience at the heart of any service.



Tanya Sealey
Programme Lead,
Carers Trust

Tanya is Programme Lead for Carer Money Matters at Carers Trust, working with 24 local partners, across the UK, to support unpaid carers to maximise their income and reduce energy bills. Previously, Tanya led the Working for Carers programme at Carers Trust, providing employability support for carers in London.

Tanya has also managed a DfE-funded training programme for kinship carers, and a four-year project at Hospice UK supporting carers of people at the end of life. Tanya also spent over six years at Mind as Head of Programme Management for the mental health anti-stigma and discrimination campaign, Time to Change.



Gavin Thomas
Head of Programmes and Services,
Age Cymru

Gavin is Head of Programmes & Services at Age Cymru. An experienced third sector leader, he specialises in person-centred support and has designed and delivered front-line services rooted in a humanitarian approach.

Gavin is purpose-driven, with a deep commitment to helping people and improving the systems that support them. He has led complex projects from strategy to delivery, combining big-picture thinking with operational focus. His leadership style is grounded in transformational principles, motivating teams through shared purpose to create lasting, people-focused change.



Cat Gowers
Corporate Partnerships Manager,
Age UK

Cat is one of the Corporate Partnerships Managers at Age UK and is responsible for overseeing the delivery of Age UK's partnership with all the Gas Distribution Networks and other key partners to help support older people with information and secure the benefits they are entitled to, helping them stay safe and warm in their homes.

Cat has worked in the Charity Sector and in corporate fundraising for almost 15 years. Her career has allowed her to work across some exceptional organisations including Macmillan Cancer Support, The Stroke Association, Leonard Cheshire, Great Ormond Street Hospital and War Child. She has worked at Age UK for just over two years.



Scott Stewart
Head of Information, Advice & Friendship,
Age Scotland

Scott is the Head of Information, Advice & Friendship and is responsible for overseeing the delivery of Age Scotland's national helpline, the development and production of their free information and advice resources, and the delivery of their Friendship service, tackling loneliness and isolation. Following 22 years in the public sector managing services in Revenues & Housing Management and Adult Social Care, Scott moved to the third sector bringing his experience to the delivery of services focusing on challenging discrimination and inequality. Before joining Age Scotland in January 2024, Scott was the Manager of Disability Information Scotland, leading the team in supporting disabled people, their families and carers to overcome the barriers that disabled people experience in everyday life, furthering their independence and full participation in their communities.

VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025



Paisley Carpenter
Communities and Partnerships Officer,
Wales & West Utilities

Paisley has been a dedicated member of Wales & West Utilities since 2015, starting as a Quotes Assistant and progressing to her current role as a Communities & Partnerships Officer within the People and Engagement Team. She leads the company's carbon monoxide (CO) awareness and prevention strategy, overseeing its delivery programme to enhance public safety, and represents WWU in key industry forums including the GDN CO group and All Party Parliamentary Carbon Monoxide Group.

Paisley plays a pivotal role in driving collaborative efforts across the sector and also manages the colleague Gas Safety Ambassador programme, ensuring effective engagement in gas safety initiatives.



Rachel Harrison
Project Co-Ordinator - Improving
Performance in Practice (iPiP),
elearning for healthcare (elfh)

Rachel has come from a midwifery background, latterly being the Public Health Midwife at UHCW and the Local Maternity Neonatal System (LMNS) Transformation Lead. Her work within the smoking cessation remit led her to also understand the dangers of environmental carbon monoxide (CO) and, as a result, developed working partnerships between the local maternity services and the fire and rescue teams. Rachel started working as part of the iPiP team in March 2024. Since then, she has been working on developing a national tool kit to support maternity services with education for health professionals on CO which has included new elfh modules hosted on the NHSE e-learning platform, supporting UKHSA in the development and testing of new guidance for midwifery staff and evaluating the pathway between maternity services and Fire and Rescue in Coventry and Warwickshire.



Suzanne Callington
Social & Vulnerability Safeguarding Specialist,
Cadent

Suzanne has been with Cadent and its predecessors for 20 years. During this time, she has worked within various areas of the business and has experience of Connections/Disconnections, Customer Account Management, Customer Experience and Commercial roles. Suzanne is passionate about raising awareness on carbon monoxide (CO) and has delivered large scale media campaigns.

Currently, Suzanne manages various projects relating to CO, such as school education programmes, CO in pregnancy research studies, e-learning for healthcare professionals and working in partnership with regional Fire and Rescue Services across Cadent's networks.



James Perry
Director,
Egnida Innovation

James has over 15 years' experience of delivering award-winning and innovative digital solutions across the energy, public service, social and higher education sectors. He specialises in delivering technical solutions different from existing systems and managing teams through the change. His digital systems and solutions have won awards for their positive social impact, and he is driven by using technology to solve social issues, to create greater transparency and better public and social sector services.

Egnida Innovation provide digital tools to the energy sector bringing cutting edge technology to solve customer safeguarding and efficiency problems.



Kathy O'Brien
Head of Corporate Partnerships,
The Scouts

Kathy is the Head of Corporate Partnerships at The Scouts. After starting out in the media industry, she moved into the charity sector, driven by a real passion for helping young people gain the skills and confidence they need to thrive.

Working with the Gas Distribution Networks over several years, she is especially proud of the hands-on, engaging activities that have been developed, bringing learning to life for thousands of young people across the UK. Hugely popular with all age groups, she's delighted to see the strong and lasting partnership between The Scouts and the GDNs continuing to grow.



Emily Lomasney-Duffy
Partnerships Account Manager,
The Scouts

Emily looks after a range of partnerships at The Scouts, all with the aim of helping young people gain essential #SkillsForLife. She works closely with the Gas Distribution Networks to develop activities that raise awareness of energy efficiency and carbon monoxide safety, not just for young people, but for their leaders too.

Working with the Programme and Creative teams, Emily helps shape fun, hands-on experiences that bring these important topics to life in a way that's engaging, practical, and easy to understand.

VCMA Annual Showcase Report 2025



David McCrone
Head of Price Control Operations Policy,
Ofgem

David is Head of Price Control Operations Policy at Ofgem, where he leads the operational delivery of the RIIO-2 price controls, including RIIO-GD2 for gas distribution.

Having joined Ofgem in 2013, he currently oversees key policy areas such as the Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA), ensuring that funding supports innovative projects that deliver tangible benefits for vulnerable consumers.



Phil Burrows
Head of Customer Vulnerability and Social
Purpose, Cadent

Phil heads up the VCMA and Services Beyond the Meter teams at Cadent and has responsibility for managing the VCMA regulatory allowance for fuel poverty and carbon monoxide (CO) projects. These projects drive Cadent's Force for Good strategy both internally and externally.

Phil is passionate about creating fairer opportunities in the communities that Cadent serve and to ensure that those people most in need can access support and advice easily and locally. Phil oversees over 130 projects as well as 350 Centres for Warmth. He continuously looks to raise the profile of CO and fuel poverty to Parliamentarians, Local Authorities and other important Stakeholders.



Eileen Brown
Customer Experience Director,
Northern Gas Networks

Eileen has over 20 years' experience of working in the utilities sector and has led the customer strategy team for Northern Gas Networks (NGN) for over 14 years. During this time, Eileen has been involved in transforming the service delivery at NGN by really striving to go above and beyond customer expectations.

Over the last 10 years Eileen has worked to develop a holistic and sustainable approach to supporting our customers in vulnerable situations. This has involved engaging with key stakeholders to form strategic and delivery partnerships, as well as making sure that the needs of customers in vulnerable situations are considered during every action that NGN takes as a business.



Nigel Winnan
Head of Customer and Social Obligations
Strategy, Wales & West Utilities

Nigel joined British Gas via the graduate scheme in 1991. He has managed operational delivery and back-office processes including the Wales & West Utilities Connections business and work on regulatory Business Plans. He has taken the lead on Wales & West Utilities' social obligations programme, developing partnerships and programmes funded through the Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) and Fuel Poor Network Extension Scheme (FPNES).

Nigel chairs the Gas Distribution Networks' VCMA Steering Group and sits on external groups such as the Business in the Community Cymru leadership board, and the Welsh Government Fuel Poverty Advisory Board.



Maureen McIntosh
Director of Customer Services,
SGN

Maureen has over 30 years in the energy industry. She joined SGN in 2006 and has since been instrumental in shaping the company's customer service strategy. Her efforts have led to a culture where customer satisfaction and safety are central to SGN's operations, contributing to SGN's status as the UK's top gas distribution network for customer satisfaction.