Start date: April 2026
PEA reference: PCG-Collab-005b

Keeping Dialysis Patients Warm & Well

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

UK GAS DISTRIBUTION NETWORKS

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Project registration table

Project summary	
Project title	**Keeping Dialysis Patients Warm & Well**
Strategic area	Supporting Priority Customer Groups
Lead partner name	Kidney Care UK
Lead GDN(s)	WWU
Funding GDN(s)	Cadent, NGN, SGN, and WWU
New/Updated **(indicate as appropriate)**	New
Collaborative VCMA Projects Specific role(s) of GDN(s) participating in a collaborative VCMA Project	WWU – Lead Cadent, NGN and SGN - delivery only
Date of PEA submission	
Project start and end date	April 2026 –March 2028
Project location	Scotland, Wales, Southwest England, Southeast England, Northwest England & Northeast England
Sectors involved (include only those involved)	Gas Distribution Network Charitable Organisation
Project contact	
Name	Sophie Stone
Contact details	VCMA@wwutilities.co.uk
Project partners and third parties involved	
Organisation name	**Role**
Kidney Care UK	Delivery of core funded service
Costs and funding	
Total cost (£k)	£1,094,510.21
Total VCMA funding required (£k)	Total = £1,094,510.21

GDN	Funding
Cadent	£163,062.53
NGN	£159,969.21
SGN	£194,142.06
WWU	£577,336.62

Total BAU vulnerability and CO safety activity baseline allowance funding by activity (£k)	N/A - PEA may be updated at the time of providing items such as CO alarms/Warm Packs

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Problem(s)

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

"Working together with the GDNs to build a sustainable, unique patient support service for more than 20,000 patients living with chronic kidney disease (CKD) across the UK, embedded in the community, in the NHS, and changing lives forever."

CKD is a common, long-term and irreversible condition affecting 7.2 million people in the UK - around 1 in the 10 of the adult population. Numbers are expected to rise over the next decade, driven by the increase in type 2 diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular disease, which can all lead to an increased risk of CKD.

Living with CKD is tough. There is no cure. It affects every part of your life. Even with treatment, patients live with breathlessness, nausea, and extreme itching. Fatigue, brain fog, depression and chronic pain are commonplace as is anaemia, which leads to difficulty keeping warm and feeling extremely cold, and maintaining a basic quality of life. Cuts to statutory funding and rising energy bills mean that increasingly patients need the practical, emotional and financial support that Kidney Care UK has been providing for 50 years.

Once your kidneys fail, dialysis treatment is critical to keep you alive. Dialysis artificially does the job of your kidneys, requiring 3 sessions per week for up to 8 hours per session. Currently in the UK, around 32,000 patients live with dialysis due to kidney failure (and 66,000 currently receive some form of renal replacement therapy) – an additional 23,000 patients are being treated and monitored in Advanced Kidney Care Clinics across the UK, which means they are rapidly progressing towards kidney failure and require dialysis or transplantation in the next 18-24 months. 8,000 new patients need to start dialysis every year. There is not enough capacity in the 284 renal units to service this demand.

Due to the time constraints of treatment and health impacts of treatment for kidney failure, only 26% of the dialysis population are in any form of employment. The latest ONS report puts the need of dialysis patients in sharp focus. CKD drives the largest increase in benefit receipt of any condition: - up 16.3% four years after diagnosis - CKD leads to the highest total earnings loss - £17,639 over five years - CKD causes a 9.4% fall in the likelihood of employment four years after diagnosis – second only to stroke. The data likewise underlines how valuable our partnership is with the GDNs to advance our life changing support for thousands of the most vulnerable households across the UK GDN network.

Kidney Care UK has been delivering transformational patient support services since 1975. For the last 3 years, we have worked with the GDNs on our 'Safe and Warm' initiative, delivering wide-reaching impact across areas of acute deprivation, fuel poverty and need. To December 2025, this service has supported 15,421 kidney patients, realised £2.1 m in enduring financial gains and £351,866 in single payments, improving patients' financial resilience.

Scope and objectives

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

Working with the participating GDNs, Kidney Care UK will directly address the significant medical, financial and social pressures faced by people living with chronic kidney disease by delivering a coordinated set of high

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impact support activities designed to improve safety, stability and quality of life for vulnerable households across the GDN regions. Building on Kidney Care UK's established national infrastructure and existing partnership with the GDNs, the service will provide immediate and long-term assistance through an integrated model of financial, emotional, practical and energy safeguarding support.

For patients on dialysis and approaching dialysis: a specialist, face-to-face Patient Support service will support a total of 2,549 dialysis patients per year (total of 5,098 over 2 years) in areas of the highest need and deprivation. This service includes money and energy support tailored to the specific challenges faced by kidney patients.

For patients approaching kidney failure: A Support Line, including WhatsApp, webchat, email referrals and a freephone number (0808 801 00 00). This service ensures immediate access to trained KCUK operators who offer support in 'real time' to those facing crisis. This service will support 7,700 patients per year (15,400 total over 2 years)

Overall support delivered: 24,594* patients will be supported in person and by Support Line

*Based on total patient population of the renal units supported through the project with 2% increase per annum, as per UK Kidney Association (UKKA) statistics.

In summary, the scope of this partnership includes:

- Direct financial support through KCUK hardship grants programme
- Income maximisation, including specialist advice on welfare entitlement and PIP
- Mitigating cost of living challenges with advice and support to access utility tariffs, energy consumption, and transport costs
- Tailored money and energy support
- KCUK holiday grants
- Free renal counselling
- Free, high quality patient information
- Peer support through our Young Adult Kidney Group (16-30)
- PSR referrals
- Carbon monoxide awareness
- CKD training for GDN teams and visits to renal units

Reneal Unit delivery locations by GDN network area:

	Cadent	NGN	SGN	WWU
Renal Units	Liverpool Wirral Manchester Salford	Middlesborough Teesside Cumbria	Ayrshire Dumfries & Galloway Kent & Canterbury Brighton South London	Wales Bristol Gloucestershire Cornwall Plymouth Devon Exeter

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Project design engagement

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

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

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

The design of this project has been shaped by the identification of a significant and growing vulnerability among people living with chronic kidney disease, informed by national CKD prevalence data, regional deprivation analysis, and insight gathered through the GDNs three-year partnership with Kidney Care UK under the 'Safe and Warm' initiative. Through this work, and through engagement with renal units, NHS clinical teams, and social workers, we have seen firsthand the acute financial stress, energy intensive treatment needs, and restricted income experienced by dialysis and advanced CKD patients. These insights, supported by KCUK's data on rising demand for crisis support, unclaimed benefit recovery, and the scale of fuel poverty among dialysis households, guided our targeting of vulnerability support and the integration of data and technology, including improved information-sharing pathways with NHS renal teams and utility providers.

Stakeholders have played an active role in shaping the model: clinicians who were part of the Welsh Kidney Network steering group highlighted the need for embedded, face-to-face support in renal units; utility partners stressed clearer routes into social tariffs and PSR registration; and patient feedback consistently reinforced the importance of holistic, easily accessible advice. This collective engagement informed our decision to prioritise a scalable national model combining specialist on the ground Patient Support Officers with a technology enabled Support Line, ensuring that the most vulnerable patients can access support regardless of location or treatment burden.

The project has been designed in close collaboration with Kidney Care UK and a wide network of regional and national stakeholders, ensuring that people living with kidney disease remain at the centre of every stage of development. Throughout GD2, the GDNs shared emerging insights from both our collaborative 'Safe and Warm' project and Wales specific 'Patient Support & Advocacy service' project through local and national engagement events, including the VCMA Showcase event in 2025 and WWU Partner Network events, where stakeholders consistently endorsed both the direction and aims of our work.

Stakeholder feedback has directly informed the design of the project, reinforcing the need for scalable, accessible support that addresses the intertwined challenges of energy affordability, health, and income for vulnerable patients.

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Why the project is being funded through the VCMA

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

This project meets this eligibility criteria, as the project aligns with the GDNs collaborative vulnerability strategy, in which we have a clear ambition to keep our communities safe and warm, and to support those most in need by helping vulnerable households not just today but as we invest in a green energy future.

This project aligns with the following shared objectives of our collaborative vulnerability strategy:

- Empower local communities to identify and support vulnerable households with their energy safeguarding needs
- Help more vulnerable households access energy safeguarding services
- Reach communities under-served and most in need of trusted intermediaries to take up support services

It has been co-designed with Kidney Care UK and been developed in line with the updated VCMI governance framework, embedding robust oversight, transparency and continuous improvement from the outset. The VCMA eligibility criteria have been met and are detailed within the table at the end of the PEA.

The GDNs' vulnerability strategy under the pillar "supporting priority customer groups" underpins this approach, using data and insights to identify those customers who are both most in need and least likely to access help without tailored provision. By combining this evidence led targeting with trusted intermediaries and specialist, accessible services, the project is designed to reach people who would otherwise be excluded from essential support.

How VCMA funding complements or supplements BAU activities

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

By working with KCUK, the GDNs have an established referral pathway for any customers living with CKD they identify who many need support though KCUK services.

KCUK may refer into the GDNs where they identify a customer who could benefit for the installation of a Locking Cooker Valve. The GDNs may also provide KCUK with CO alarms or Warm Packs at any point throughout the duration of project delivery. Any associated volumes or costs will be added to the PEA by way of an update as appropriate.

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Outcomes, associated actions and success criteria

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

Kidney Care UK and the GDNs will carry out monthly reporting reviews on measurable outcomes against targets to ensure successful delivery. Quarterly reviews will provide the opportunity for more in-depth analysis and the ability to highlight insights and learnings to share, as well as identify any risks and requirement for any associated actions to mitigate these.

Key outcomes expected from this project:

Outcome	Target	Target by network			
		Cadent Target	NGN Target	SGN Target	WWU Target
Total Reach:					
On dialysis or approaching kidney failure :	**9194**	**2400**	**1246**	**2402**	**3146**
Indirect Engagement	4,096	1,600	446	1,404	646
In-person Direct Support	5,098	800	800	998	2,500
Support Line	**15,400**	**3080**	**3080**	**3080**	**6160**
Total Reach	**24,594**	**5,480**	**4,326**	**5,482**	**9,306**
Outcomes by activity:					
PSR Conversations	4590	720	720	900	2250
PSR Registration	510	80	80	100	250
Wellbeing Support	1530	240	240	300	750
Income Maximisation – (Welfare Benefits)	1020	160	160	200	500
Fire and Rescue (Safe & Well Visit Referral)	52	8	8	10	24
CO Safety Awareness	4590	720	720	900	2250

Success Criteria

During this 2-year project, Kidney Care UK will provide direct, face-to-face support to 9,194 dialysis patients in renal units across the UK, 5,098 of which will be directly supported by specially trained Patient Support Officers (PSO), offering tailored financial, practical and emotional assistance and a further 15,400 patients will be supported through KCUK's dedicated Support Line.

This model is designed to:

- Maximise and increase income for CKD patients
- Reduce utility related expenditure
- Provide financial comfort and relief from financial stress
- Improve well-being and control, empowering vulnerable households to feel safe and warm
- Counselling to support kidney patients across target regions
- Unlocking unclaimed welfare benefit entitlements, e.g. blue badges and PIP, and assist with applications and form filling processes – often exceptionally difficult for people on dialysis
- Referring appropriate utility company social tariffs and schemes
- Administering fuel and food vouchers
- Referrals to relevant charitable organisations to help reduce utility debt
- Raise CO awareness and increase PSR registrations

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Potential for new learning

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

Building on the success of our partnership to date, this project will improve circumstances of vulnerable patients who need to be in a safe, warm house yet face increasing costs and reduced income. Our partnership will empower patients to navigate complex systems, enabling KCUK to proactively campaign to improve regulatory practice via the Government, OFWAT and OFGEM.

Our partnership will enable GDNs to engage with kidney patients to understand the impact of BAU street works and mains replacement programmes, allowing for adaptations to services.

Working with the GDNs means KCUK can encourage patients to engage with the transition to net zero. Directing patients to more affordable, eco-friendly tariffs and highlighting the provision of smart controls, KCUK is well-positioned to enable GDNs to engage with vulnerable households who would typically not explore and access net zero transition.

Our data sharing expertise means we can support sector-wide initiatives for net zero transition in our community, KCUK is keen to be involved in this important work. CKD treatment is utility-intensive: the average home dialysis patient uses as much as a 7,502 litres of water per week (equivalent to 214 showers p/w) and a disproportionate amount of power to run the dialysis machine.

The GDNs expect to gain valuable new learning on how kidney patients interact with energy, water and utility systems, how BAU street works and mains replacement programmes affect this community, and how best to support vulnerable households through the transition to net zero. The insight gathered will strengthen industry approaches to vulnerability, improve cross sector coordination, and ensure that future services are more inclusive, targeted and effective. We are committed to sharing this learning widely through the VCMI governance framework, including, though not limited to the VCMI Annual Reports and regional and national stakeholder events, ensuring that the full sector benefits from the evidence generated through this partnership.

Aligning with and supporting wider vulnerability approaches

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

Over recent years, Kidney Care UK has established a strong network of partnerships across the wider utility sector, and this project aligns closely with those broader industry approaches to vulnerability by ensuring that support for kidney patients is coordinated, evidence based and delivered consistently across multiple services.

These partnerships, built on shared goals of improving outcomes for people living with chronic kidney disease, have enabled utility providers to improve their understanding of CKD and to shape services that better meet the needs of severely vulnerable households.

As part of this collaborative approach, all partnerships begin with comprehensive training and awareness sessions for customer facing teams, including call handlers, engineering teams and affordability specialists, helping to embed vulnerability awareness across the sector.

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Beyond the VCMA, several utilities have cofounded related initiatives, such as SSEN's investment in a Patient Support Officer for northern Scotland, illustrating growing cross-sector commitment to supporting CKD patients. Wider collaboration has also driven tangible service improvements, such as E.ON Next reviewing the suitability of prepayment meters for households on home dialysis and implementing innovative data-sharing agreements to better identify at risk customers.

Across more than 20 utility partners, there is a shared ambition to increase PSR registrations among kidney patients and to promote access to eco efficient appliances, water efficiency measures, and net-zero aligned energy options.

Despite this progress, significant gaps remain in the provision of vulnerability and affordability services for kidney patients, many of whom face high levels of deprivation, fuel poverty and unemployment. Through this project, the GDNs aim to strengthen these broader vulnerability strategies by leveraging Kidney Care UK's deep clinical understanding and trusted relationships, ensuring that vulnerable patients receive more inclusive, effective and targeted support across the utility landscape.

By offering tailored, accessible guidance on home energy efficiency, PSR registration, carbon monoxide safety, unclaimed benefits and energy debt pathways, the initiative directly reflects the principles set out in the Fuel Poverty Strategies for England, Scotland and Wales and aligns with the ambitions of the Warm Homes Plan to target those most at risk.

In Scotland and Wales, the project will complement the work of established organisations such as Home Energy Scotland and Warm Wales, which delivers energy efficiency advice and practical support to households experiencing fuel poverty. Through clear referral pathways and partnership working, this initiative will strengthen the ecosystem of support available to vulnerable people, ensuring that those identified through trusted advice services can be connected seamlessly to specialist provision where appropriate.

Monitoring and evaluation

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

Kidney Care UK and the GDNs will continue to review monthly reports on measurable outcomes, working collaboratively to ensure successful delivery. Each quarter, the core project team will meet to share performance insights, highlight and mitigate any underperformance, and provide structured updates on delivery, risks and emerging outcomes.

WWU as the lead GDN will work with Kidney Care UK to ensure that there is an evidence base through audit and research that seeks to understand how effective the project is at engaging people with chronic kidney disease to improve the quality of life for vulnerable households and assess the before and after to better understand the impact of the services provided on the lived experience of beneficiaries. WWU will also ask KCUK to share testimonials and case studies from patients who benefit from the support of the project, where applicable.

The GDNs will report annually on partnership impact, sharing broadly via collaborative and company-specific reports to showcase outcomes and key learnings and inform future delivery. Additionally, the Vulnerability Working Group will provide performance updates to the National Delivery Group and National Steering Panel (NSP) with all GDNs disseminating results through their business governance processes, including their respective Independent Steering Groups (ISG).

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Scale of VCMA project and SROI calculations, including NPV

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

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

We've incorporated social value based on the deliverables and associated targets detailed above. Carrying out an assessment of these predicted outcomes we forecast a positive net Social Return on Investment of £21.03 for every £1 spent.

Social value measurement

Total cost*	£1,094,231.70
Total gross present value	£24,103,218.07
Net Present Value (NPV)	£23,008,986.37
SROI	£21.03

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

Internal governance and project management evidence

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

Project management for this partnership will be led by WWU on behalf of the participating GDNs, with clear governance arrangements in place to monitor delivery, performance and risk throughout the duration of the project. A structured contract framework will ensure that any material changes remain aligned with customer need and stakeholder expectations, safeguarding the effective and responsible use of VCMA funds.

WWU has worked closely with Kidney Care UK and the other GDNs to co-design this partnership so that its ambition directly contributes to the GDN's Collaborative Vulnerability Strategy, developed through the Vulnerability Working Group and overseen by the GDN VCMA Steering Group.

The PEA has been reviewed and approved through each network's internal governance processes and formally signed off by the relevant senior leaders.

GDN	Approver (Name and Role)	Date
Cadent	Phil Burrows - Head of Social Programmes	
NGN	Eileen Brown - Customer Experience Director	
SGN	Maureen McIntosh - Director of Customer Services	
WWU	Bethan Jones - Head of People and Customer Experience	

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Eligibility Criteria

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

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Eligibility criteria for company specific essential gas appliance servicing

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

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Eligibility criteria for company specific essential gas appliance repair and replacement

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

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