Energy Support for Carers - Dundee

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

Updated: April 2026
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Project registration table

Project summary	
Project title	Energy Support for Carers - Dundee
Strategic area	Supporting Priority Customer Groups
Lead partner name	Dundee Carers Centre
New/Updated	New
Date of PEA submission	April 2026
Project start and end date	April 2026 – March 2028
Project location	Scotland
Sectors Involved	Gas Distribution Network Charitable Organisation
Project contact	
Name	Margaret Hamilton
Contact details	Positive.impact@sgn.co.uk
Project partners and third parties involved	
Organisation name	**Role**
Dundee Carers Centre	Delivery partner
Costs and funding	
Total cost (£k)	Redacted due to commercial sensitivity
Total VCMA funding required (£k)	£57,500
Total BAU vulnerability and CO safety activity baseline allowance funding by activity (£k)	Redacted due to commercial sensitivity

Problem(s)

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

Rising energy costs, fuel poverty and financial insecurity continue to place severe pressure on households across the UK. Since 2021, energy prices have almost doubled, and as of early 2026, it's estimated that around 6.7 million households across the UK are living in fuel poverty. Nearly half of low-income households remain in homes that are hard to heat, leaving millions exposed to cold, damp conditions that harm their physical and mental health.

Fuel poverty remains a significant and persistent challenge across Scotland, driven by a combination of low household incomes, rising energy costs, and the poor energy efficiency of much of the country's housing stock. Many households spend a substantial share of their income on energy just to maintain safe and healthy living conditions with the most vulnerable households facing the greatest barriers to staying warm, well, and financially secure.

In addition, Scotland is home to over 700,000 unpaid carers, including 28,000 young carers. Data from Scotland's Census shows that carers are providing more hours of care than ever before, with the estimated value of their contribution across Scotland now reaching a staggering £15.9 billion every year.

However, these immense savings to the economy come at a significant personal cost to carers themselves:

- Nearly half (48%) of unpaid carers, and almost two-thirds of parent carers (62%), have been forced to cut back on essentials such as food and heating to make ends meet (The Cost of Caring in Scotland 2025, Carers Scotland).
- Unpaid carers are more likely to fall into poverty than adults overall according to the UK Poverty 2026 report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Over half of all children living in poverty are in households where someone is disabled, and many of these children take on caring responsibilities themselves (Poverty in Scotland 2025, Joseph Rowntree Foundation).

In Scotland, unpaid carers also face disproportionately high utility costs, driven by the additional needs of the people they care for. Increased use of heating, laundry, bathing, and specialist equipment significantly raises household energy consumption, pressures that are further compounded by Scotland's climate and rising energy costs. As a result, unpaid carers are shouldering both emotional and financial burdens that remain largely unseen and inadequately addressed.

Dundee is home to an estimated 17,000 unpaid carers, despite being the geographically smallest local authority in Scotland. Within this compact area, around one third of neighbourhoods fall within the 20% most deprived areas nationally. In addition, approximately 12.5% of the working-age population is classified as employment-deprived, highlighting significant socioeconomic challenges alongside high levels of unpaid caring (Scottish Census, 2020).

This reveals an overwhelming need for support and speaks to the profound scale of the challenges people are facing, including the disproportionate financial insecurity that unpaid carers experience, the high levels of poverty, and related trauma.

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.

Dundee Carers Centre works to make a positive and lasting difference to the lives of carers and disabled people across Dundee, by providing high-quality information, advice and support services for adult carers, young carers and disabled people, working in every locality within the city.

Dundee Carers Centre support carers of all ages who look after family members, friends, or neighbours affected by illness, disability, drug or alcohol dependency, and/or mental health issues. Their work is rooted in understanding the vital role carers play and ensuring they are supported, informed, and valued within their communities.

Working together, we have co-designed a new partnership, building directly on the learning from our previous project with Carers Trust which delivered successful outcomes between April 2024 and March 2026.

The project will support carers who are struggling to keep their homes safe and warm, many of whom face the stark and unacceptable choice between heating their homes and feeding their families. By combining immediate practical assistance with long-term, sustainable solutions, the project will help carers across Dundee to reduce fuel poverty and improve household wellbeing.

The initiative will prioritise those at greatest risk, including adult carers, young carers, parent carers, disabled people living with their carers, and carers from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities. Through targeted, tailored support, the project will address both urgent needs and the underlying causes of fuel poverty, helping carers to achieve greater financial resilience, improved living conditions, and long-term security.

The project will:

- Co-develop a training programme to help staff identify, triage and support families in energy crisis using regional resources
- Provide an inclusive energy safeguarding support service which provides information on carbon monoxide safety, and supported access to energy safeguarding schemes including the Priority Services Register
- Increase financial resilience by supporting carers with budgeting skills and income maximisation
- Provide energy efficiency advice to help carers use energy more affordably and efficiently
- Provide access and onward referrals into our Safe & Warm partnership network and other regional and local support services

To ensure individual needs are effectively met, service delivery will be offered through a flexible and accessible range of platforms. These will include one-to-one appointments, outreach sessions, home visits, and remote support via telephone, email, and text. In addition, group information sessions will be provided alongside accessible information resources such as leaflets, social media channels, and a dedicated website.

Overall, the project is designed to deliver tangible, measurable improvements in carer wellbeing, energy security, and household safety. By addressing both immediate needs and long-term resilience, it provides carers with greater stability, comfort, and peace of mind. Ultimately, the project ensures carers can live and work in safe, secure homes, while empowering them with the knowledge, confidence, and practical tools to independently manage their energy needs now and in the future.

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.

Building on the success of our GD2 project, we have co-designed this new initiative with Dundee Carers Centre, drawing directly on their frontline insights into the barriers carers face and the types of interventions that create meaningful, lasting change.

This programme will continue to be delivered in a fully joined up way, building on the strong collaborative model established in GD2, including local authorities, health and social care partnerships, and community partners supporting carers.

Dundee Carer Centre's strategic role as a lead partner within the Dundee Carers Partnership provides a strong foundation for effective partnership working that delivers tangible benefits for carers.

By collaborating with a wide range of organisations that support carers and their families, they are well placed to strengthen and extend partnership activity. This creates opportunities to broaden collaboration with organisations offering both complementary and similar services, supported through formal and informal referral pathways, effective signposting, joint awareness-raising activity, and active networking.

Dundee Carers Centre has a well-established and trusted track record of supporting Dundee's most vulnerable carer households. Through their day-to-day services, they engage directly with carers, gaining a clear and ongoing understanding of their concerns, priorities, and what will make the greatest difference in their lives. This continuous, real-time insight informs and shapes the Centre's approach, ensuring that the support offered is relevant, responsive, and genuinely effective.

This project has also been shaped by the principles co-developed with our Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Steering Group (VSG), ensuring that vulnerable households, as a priority customer group, are meaningfully involved in the design of locally accessible services. The VSG's framework emphasises coproduction with trusted community partners, equitable access regardless of personal circumstances, and the importance of tailoring support to local need. By grounding the project in a shared, evidence-based understanding of vulnerability we're building a service that is not only responsive to the lived experience of vulnerable families, but also aligned with wider commitments to fairness, inclusion, and targeted support for those most at risk.

Why the project is being funded through the VCMA

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

This project meets the VCMA eligibility criteria because it directly supports our Vulnerability Strategy and our overarching ambition to keep communities safe, warm, and supported, both now and as we transition toward a

green, clean energy future. Our strategy places vulnerable households at the centre of our decision making, ensuring that those most in need receive meaningful, practical assistance.

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

In addition, the project reflects the strategic priorities of our Vulnerability Strategy – an approach shared by all four gas networks – which delivers support across four core areas:

- Providing Services Beyond the Meter – direct services for vulnerable households as we go about our day-to-day operational work that extends beyond traditional gas network responsibilities
- Tackling Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability – targeted support for customers struggling to afford energy, helping households reduce energy costs, improve efficiency, and access essential advice
- Supporting Priority Customer Groups – identifying and assisting those with heightened needs, ensuring they receive tailored and timely support
- Reducing Carbon Monoxide Harm – a data driven approach to raising awareness, improving safety, and reducing carbon monoxide risks.

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

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

The VCMA eligibility criteria have been met and are detailed within the table at the end of the PEA.

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 closely with frontline organisations that support vulnerable households, the project has established clear and effective referral pathways for households who may benefit from its services. The learning and insights generated to date will further strengthen how these households are engaged, particularly where barriers to accessing essential services are identified.

As a local carers' charity, Dundee Carers Centre is well-positioned to engage directly and effectively with vulnerable households, provide tailored guidance, and refer eligible individuals for BAU-funded support. This includes the provision of carbon monoxide alarms, Locking Cooker Valves, and other measures that help maintain safety and independence in the home.

Justification for why the project should not be collaborative

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

This project is not intended to operate as a collaborative initiative, as a national programme to support carers, Carents Room, is already being established across Scotland, England and Wales. Rather than duplicating this existing provision, we have chosen to develop a regional Scotland Carers Group that complements the national offer by delivering at a local level.

This regional approach is designed to deliver targeted support across the SGN Scotland network areas. The programme will be delivered by four specialist carer organisations, each responsible for delivery within one of SGN Scotland's regional areas: Central, East, North and West Scotland.

Dundee Carers Centre works exclusively in Dundee, covering our north region, and is uniquely positioned to understand the distinct needs, barriers, and lived experiences of Dundee carers. The project model is built on organisational insight, trusted relationships, and place-based delivery, which do not lend themselves to shared delivery across multiple GDN areas.

The purpose of this initiative is to address a specific and clearly defined gap in support for a single under-served priority group. Because of this targeted focus, a broader collaborative model would not be appropriate or effective in achieving the intended outcomes.

Carers living with poverty and trauma often do not engage with multiple agencies or traditional energy advice services. By offering a 'one-stop' approach that combines financial, energy, and emotional support, Dundee Carers Centre fills this gap and ensures that adult carers, young carers, and disabled people, are protected from the harmful effects of cold homes, debt and disconnection.

Outcomes, associated actions and success criteria

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

Outcome	Project Target	Interim Milestones*
Energy Triage	600	Quarterly Performance - 75
CO Safety Information	600	Quarterly Performance - 75
CO Alarm Provision	60	Quarterly Performance - 7
PSR Conversations	600	Quarterly Performance - 75
PSR Registrations	100	Quarterly Performance - 12
Energy Advice (across a number of energy advice measurable areas)	600	Quarterly Performance - 75
Income Maximisation (across a number of income generating measurable areas)	600	Quarterly Performance - 75

Wellbeing Support	300	Quarterly Performance - 37
Broadband / Digital Skills Information	150	Quarterly Performance - 18

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

Success Criteria

During this 24-month project, Dundee Carers Centre will deliver direct support to 600 vulnerable households across Dundee. Support will be accessible through multiple channels including one-to-one appointments, outreach sessions, home visits, and remote support via telephone, email, and text. In addition, group information sessions will be provided alongside accessible information resources such as leaflets, social media channels, and a dedicated website.

Through these interventions, households will report strengthened ability to maintain a safe and warm home, improved financial resilience, increased access to entitlements such as the Priority Services Register, and enhanced overall wellbeing.

Potential for new learning

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

The impact of this project extends beyond direct support to vulnerable households in Scotland creating learning that can strengthen practice across our wider Safe and Warm partnership network and inform other community-based initiatives.

This project has been built on a strong foundation of data, insight and the lived experience of families who have sought support from Dundee Carers Centre throughout the cost of living and energy crises. Moving forward, learning will focus on strengthening multi-agency collaboration and deepening an understanding of how emotional wellbeing and financial hardship intersect.

Designed from the outset to be inclusive, community centred and evidence led, the project has been intentionally structured to generate learning that will inform future engagement programmes.

In addition, we will bring together the regional Energy Support for Carers delivery leads to share insights, strengthen connections and build a collaborative network of support and best practice across the unpaid carer community. This collective approach ensures that the impact of the project extends well beyond direct support to vulnerable households in Scotland, generating learning that can enhance practice across our wider Safe and Warm partnership network and inform the development of other community-based initiatives.

At a national level, the learning will continue to be shared as it was during GD2 by way of contributions to wider discussions on how to strengthen support for vulnerable families via local and regional partner events such as our Partner Spotlight sessions and regional events, our dedicated partner webpages and partner toolkit as well as through our annual vulnerability reports.

These outputs would be openly shared with the other GDNs via the Vulnerability Working Group and the GDN national Delivery Group and where requested the National Steering Panel.

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.

Scotland's wider vulnerability landscape is shaped by a clear national commitment to ensuring that no household is left behind in the transition to a fairer, greener, and more resilient energy system. The Scottish Fuel Poverty Strategy sets out a statutory framework that recognises fuel poverty as a multidimensional issue, driven by low-income, high-energy costs, poor energy efficiency, and wider social inequalities. It emphasises the need for targeted, place-based interventions, strong local partnerships, and support that reaches those who face the greatest barriers to accessing national schemes. This project aligns directly with that approach by focusing on a priority group identified as both highly vulnerable and historically underserved, ensuring that support is delivered where it is most needed and in a form that families can trust and access.

This model mirrors the principles of Scotland's new Warm Homes Plan, which places a strong emphasis on tackling inequality, improving energy literacy, and ensuring that vulnerable families benefit first from decarbonisation and energy efficiency improvements.

Across the UK, utilities increasingly recognise that supporting vulnerable households requires coordinated, multi-agency working. Energy and water are moving towards shared Priority Services Registers, joint outreach programmes, and collaborative safeguarding approaches to ensure that people with the highest needs receive consistent, wrap around support. This project reflects that direction of travel by working in partnership with local authority teams, health services, community organisations, and specialist advice providers to ensure that they are aware of this ambition and have the skills to share this with eligible households. Through these relationships, households receive holistic assistance that spans energy safeguarding, financial wellbeing, home environment support, and wider health and social needs.

By combining national policy alignment with local delivery capability, the project strengthens Scotland's wider vulnerability ecosystem. It ensures that the most disadvantaged households, those facing fuel poverty, digital exclusion, and limited access to services are included in the green energy transition. It also reinforces the principle that effective vulnerability support must be both data driven and community led, rooted in trusted relationships, and delivered through a network of partners working together to maximise impact.

Overall, this partnership fits within broader approaches to vulnerability by addressing a recognised gap in energy advice by building community capacity to safeguard customers in crisis, that integrates with, rather than duplicates, wider national and devolved strategies.

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.

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

We will work with Dundee Carers Centre to ensure that there is an evidence base through audit and research that seeks to understand how effective the project is in supporting households who are struggling to maintain a safe and warm home and assess the before and after to better understand the impact of the services provided on the lived experience of beneficiaries.

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

Scale of VCMA project and SROI calculations, including NPV

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

Together 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 £36.04 for every £1 spent.

Social value measurement

Total cost*	£56,907.22
Total gross present value	£2,107,819.13
Net Present Value (NPV)	£2,050,911.91
SROI	£36.04

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

Internal governance and project management evidence

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

We worked closely with Dundee Carers Centre to co-design this partnership so that its ambition directly contributes to our Vulnerability Strategy, developed with support from our stakeholders including through our Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Steering Group and overseen by our Independent Steering Group.

The PEA has been reviewed and approved through our internal governance processes and formally signed off as detailed below.

Approver (Name and Role)	Date
Kerry Potter, Group Social Impact and Vulnerability Manager	22/04/26
Maureen McIntosh, Director of Customer Services	22/04/26

Eligibility Criteria

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

Eligibility criteria for company specific essential gas appliance servicing

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

Eligibility criteria for company specific essential gas appliance repair and replacement

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