

Start date: April 2026

PEA reference: PCG-Collab-003a

Home-Start UK

Safe & Warm Futures



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



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Project registration table

Project summary									
Project title	Home-Start Safe and Warm Futures								
Strategic area	Priority Customer Groups								
Lead partner name	Home-Start UK								
Lead GDN(s)	Cadent								
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	Cadent – Lead GDN NGN, SGN and WWU – delivery								
Date of PEA submission									
Project start and end date	April 2026 – March 2028								
Project location	England and Wales								
Project contact									
Name	Phil Burrows								
Contact details Email and phone number:	Email address: Phil.m.burrows@cadentgas.com Contact number: 07773545451								
Project partners and third parties involved									
Organisation name	Role								
Home –Start UK	Delivery of the core funded service								
Home-Start Cymru	Delivery partner								
Costs and funding									
Total cost (£k)	£2,138.776.00								
Total VCMA funding required (£k)	<p>Total Home-Start UK costs: £2,046,334.00</p> <table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td>Cadent</td> <td>£953,846.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NGN</td> <td>£215,384.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SGN</td> <td>£400,000.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>WWU</td> <td>£477,104.00</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Supporting materials: Cadent Leaflets: £6,138.00 Cadent slow cookers: £86,304.00</p>	Cadent	£953,846.00	NGN	£215,384.00	SGN	£400,000.00	WWU	£477,104.00
Cadent	£953,846.00								
NGN	£215,384.00								
SGN	£400,000.00								
WWU	£477,104.00								

Total BAU vulnerability and CO safety activity baseline allowance funding by activity (£k)	

Problem(s)

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

The GDNs have identified that concerns regarding child poverty are significant and widespread, not restricted to specific areas of the UK. Feedback from partners working directly with children and families, including Centres for Warmth, schools, and early years providers, combined with research from organisations such as NEA and Citizens Advice, reinforces this.

NEA's polling on Fuel Poverty Awareness Day highlights increasing pressure on households with children. They found that seven in ten (68%) parents of children under 16 are concerned about energy costs, compared with 61% of households without children. Furthermore, one in five (20%) parents reported that they were likely to go into debt, compared with 13% of those without children. ¹

Citizens Advice also reports a 500% increase in households in negative budget, rising from just over 4,000 households in 2019/20 to nearly 20,000 in 2024/25. This aligns with their national polling, which found that households with children are significantly more likely to struggle with essential costs (28%) compared with households without children (17%). ²

While overall poverty rates vary regionally from 26% in London to 23% in the Humber child poverty remains disproportionately high, with national levels reported at 30.5% for 2023/2024. Children from certain minority ethnic backgrounds are disproportionately impacted, with rates reported as:

- 65% for Bangladeshi households
- 60% for Pakistani households
- 40% for Black African households

This compares with:

- 43% for children in lone-parent families
- 36% for families where the youngest child is aged under five

Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation demonstrates that while recent proposals to address child poverty are welcome, they remain fragmented and fail to tackle the root causes. Their analysis shows that 48% of people experiencing “very deep” poverty in 2022/2023 remain trapped in severe financial hardship.

Additionally, the number of people experiencing food insecurity increased by 2.8 million between 2021/22 and 2023/24 a 60% rise in just two years.

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.

Home-Start UK is a federated network made up of independent local Home-Starts across the UK, each embedded within its community and tailoring support to local needs. Home-Start UK provides national leadership, training, quality standards, and strategic direction. Their mission is simple and powerful: to give every child the best possible start in life, because childhood can't wait.

Through this project, Home-Start will support vulnerable families with young children across England, Scotland, and Wales by delivering a blend of energy safeguarding, wellbeing, community connection, and specialist advice. As part of this work, Home-Start will deliver clear advice on the Priority Services Register (PSR), carbon monoxide (CO) safety, and energy efficiency.

Support will be delivered through a mix of light-touch, targeted, specialist group and one-to-one interventions:

- Light-touch conversations provide weekly parent-and-baby drop-ins, providing informal advice, CO awareness messaging, PSR signposting, and community connection.
- Targeted group sessions for families with shared needs including budgeting workshops, slow-cooker sessions to reduce costs, energy-saving sessions, and routines-focused support.
- For families needing more intensive help, such as support with energy debt, complex bills, or financial insecurity, Home-Start staff will work alongside families to navigate options, complete paperwork, and remain engaged with external agencies. This hands-on approach is a core component of the Home-Start model.
- All Home-Start volunteers receive training covering CO safety, PSR awareness, and wider energy safeguarding, enabling them to identify risk and appropriately support families.
- Where specialist advice is required, families are referred to expert organisations such as YES Energy Solutions or Citizens Advice, ensuring accurate and compliant guidance.

Knowledge Sharing, Quality, and Consistency:

- Home-Start will use their national Learning Centre for sharing messaging, resources, best practice, and innovative workshop ideas across the network.
- A UK-wide steering group will bring together Home-Start UK, local Home-Starts across England and Scotland, and Home-Start Cymru to drive continuous improvement and maintain alignment with VCMA objectives.
- A national Home-Start newsletter will highlight monthly themes and seasonal priorities PSR sign up drives ahead of winter, energy-saving tips, family workshop inspiration, and GDN social content ensuring consistent communication and shared learning.

Partnerships and Community Impact:

- Home-Start will continue to create warm, social community spaces, deepen relationships with referral partners, and establish clear signposting routes for staff and volunteers to access additional support for families in crisis. This ensures families receive timely, appropriate, and holistic assistance.

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 Cadent's Centres for Warmth (2023–2026), SGN's Fuelling Futures (2024–2026), and Home-Start Cymru's pilot project with Wales & West Utilities, the *Safe & Warm Futures* programme will extend vital energy safeguarding and family support across the Home-Start network. This project seeks to work collaboratively with all UK gas distribution networks, enabling support for families delivered through their local Home-Starts.

Evidence Base and Parent Insights:

A survey commissioned by Cadent, carried out by Opinion Matters, interviewed 2,002 parents with children aged 12 months to 11 years. The findings illustrate the disproportionate impact of fuel poverty on young families:

- 33% of respondents described their household as fuel poor, with 6% saying they were very fuel poor.
- Among young parents aged 16–24, 47% described themselves as fuel poor and they were twice as likely to be very fuel poor (11%).
- 26% of all parents reported having to choose between cooking a meal or heating their home. Among young parents, this increased to 41%, rising to 45% among those already living in fuel poverty.

These insights further demonstrate the essential role of early intervention, practical energy support, and relational family networks in reducing the risk of harm for families with young children.

Ensuring that the investment reaches the communities most affected by rising energy costs while enabling local Home-Starts to act quickly and effectively.

Home-Start UK will lead on:

1. Strategic Management

Designing fair, transparent, and scalable processes.

Ensuring funding reaches families most impacted by energy insecurity.

- Enabling local Home-Starts to respond rapidly to emerging need.

2. National Online Community Hub

- Curating best practice, insights, and successful approaches in one accessible space.
- Strengthening the network's capability to support families experiencing fuel poverty.

3. Facilitating System-Wide Learning

- Bringing together local Home-Starts to share innovation, challenges, and replicable models.
- Enabling rapid adoption of effective practice across hundreds of communities.

Through this coordinated approach, Home-Start UK ensures that:

- Funding is deployed efficiently and transparently.
- Local Home-Starts are equipped with strong capacity and capability.
- The federation's collective impact is amplified, particularly for families experiencing or at risk of fuel poverty.

This is critical at a time when the scale and urgency of need continue to grow, and where many families require a consistent, relational, and trusted support model that links financial wellbeing, safety, and community connection.

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 has been codesigned by Home-Start UK, Home-Start Cymru, the GDNs and a range of stakeholders to ensure it reflects the lived experience, priorities and preferences of families with children under 5 years of age.

It has 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 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.

The Home-Start project provides added value beyond the GDNs business-as-usual activities by enabling engagement with customers who would otherwise be difficult to reach.

This targeted approach ensures that vulnerable individuals, who may not engage through traditional channels, receive timely advice and interventions.

As trusted staff and volunteers they can engage more effectively with vulnerable individuals and will be BAU-funded to identify and refer eligible patients for BAU-funded support, including carbon monoxide alarms.

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.

Key outcomes expected from this project:

The table below records the reach within the total number of local Home-Starts based on previous data collected and estimated reach according to 2024/25 Home-Start data collection.

The reach in the table below is calculated for delivery per year.

Service(s)	Summary of service(s)	Cadent	SGN - England	WWU – southwest of England	WWU- Wales	NGN
Number of local Home-Starts in area		31	13	9	5	7
Number of unique individuals reached		8,000	3,355	2,200	2,420	1,200
Loneliness and isolation	Number of individuals provided with practical support to reduce feelings of loneliness	8,000	3,355	2,200		1,200
Energy efficiency advice	Number of individuals receiving energy efficiency conversations on behavioural changes to maintain a safe and warm home	8,000	3,355	2,200	2,420	1,200
Benefit and debt support	Number of individuals reached for benefit and debt support inc benefit calculations and energy bill support	800	335	180	n/a	120
Onward third-party referrals	Number of individuals referred to third party providers (eg Green Doctor, Citizens Advice) for specialist support	400	165	90	n/a	60
PSR awareness	Number of individuals having an increased awareness of the PSR through conversations with Home-Start staff and volunteers.	4,000	1,600	1100	2,420	600
Number of individuals registered on the PSR		800	320	180	110	120

Carbon monoxide awareness	Number of individuals having an increased awareness carbon monoxide dangers and safety measures	4,000	1,600	1100	2,420	600
Number of households receiving a carbon monoxide alarm		800	320	180	110	120
Additional support items	Number of slow cookers	3,100	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Staff and volunteer training	Staff and volunteer training in CO/PSR awareness and Energy Efficiency Advice	n/a	n/a	250	30	n/a
Wellbeing support	The provision of support and advice that helps individuals maintain and improve their overall health (physical and mental) and happiness	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,420	n/a
Income Maximisation (Debt management)	The provision of income maximisation advice, with a focus on guiding customers to	n/a	n/a	770		n/a

	better manage their debt					
Income Maximisation (Tariff Switching)	The provision of income maximisation advice, with a focus on guiding customers on switching energy tariffs	n/a	n/a	770		n/a

Success Criteria

During this 2-year project, Home-Start UK will provide meaningful support to families with children under the age of 5;

- Training frontline nurses and volunteers so they have the skills to offer extra help through their services
- Help for the most vulnerable households so they remain safe, warm and connected, with a reduced risk of self-disconnection
- Improved affordability through debt resolution, billing support and income maximisation
- Increased access to Priority Services Register protections for eligible customers
- Improved customer confidence, stability and ability to manage energy-related issues
- Educate families on the danger of carbon monoxide
- Register families on the PSR.

Potential for new learning

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

Reaching parents with young children can present a challenge as they do not always access services or attend parent and child groups and the children may not be attending nursery or primary schools. It can be identified if by using a single neutral partner the GDN's can provide access to the services required whilst avoiding duplication. As a national organisation they can identify any similarities and/or differences between locations, and this may inform our activities with families with older children.

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.

The partnership with Home-Start UK and Home-Start Cymru has been built on a strong foundation of data, insight and extensive frontline experience throughout GD2, which has helped shape the training and ongoing services provided.

The programme has been developed with careful consideration of the wider vulnerability landscape across England, Scotland and Wales. Its model aligns closely with the principles of the Warm Homes Plan, particularly its emphasis on early identification of vulnerable households, targeted support for families with the highest energy needs, and the vital role of trusted community-based organisations in reaching people who may not engage with statutory services.

It also reinforces industry initiatives such as the Priority Services Register by helping families understand their eligibility, supporting them to register at the earliest opportunity, and ensuring that households facing multiple, complex vulnerabilities receive the protections and tailored support they are entitled to. By integrating these national and industry priorities into a single, compassionate approach, the partnership strengthens the safety net for families in crisis and ensures that energy vulnerability is addressed in a way that is consistent, coordinated and responsive to the realities people face.

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.

To ensure effective governance, transparency, and continuous improvement, the gas networks will hold quarterly online meetings with the Home-Start project lead. These meetings will provide space to review successes, discuss challenges, share best practice, and identify any emerging obstacles early so they can be addressed promptly.

In addition, the networks and Home-Start have agreed to:

- Quarterly progress reports, providing updates on delivery, KPIs, financial position, and case studies.
- Project visits arranged where appropriate, to observe delivery in practice, meet staff and volunteers, and gather qualitative insight.

Home-Start's impact reporting blends quantitative data with qualitative insight to demonstrate both measurable outcomes and lived experience.

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 £4.47 for every £1 spent.

Social value measurement

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

Total cost*	£2,121,326.44
Total gross present value	£11,599,389.32
Net Present Value (NPV)	£9,478,062.88
SROI	£4.47

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

Internal governance and project management evidence

Project management for this partnership will be led by Cadent 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.

Cadent has worked closely with the other GDNs and Home-Start UK to codesign 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 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	14/04/2026
NGN	Eileen Brown, Director of Customer Service	20/05/2026
SGN	Maureen McIntosh, Director of Customer Services	15/04/26
WWU	Bethan Jones, Head of People & Customer Experience	20/05/2026

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	Yes

	developed and submitted to Ofgem including for the gas consumers funding the VCMA Project	
Positive NPV	Have a positive, or a forecasted positive Net Present Value (NPV)	Yes
Support Criteria	<p>Either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p>
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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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 <li>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 <li>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 N/A 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:	<p>Either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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) 	<p>N/A</p> <p>N/A</p>
Health condition	<p>Either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<p>N/A</p> <p>N/A</p>
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