

# Northern Gas Networks

Start date: April 2026





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## Community Action Northumberland – Warmth and Wellbeing Roadshows

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



 <b>Fuel Poverty and Energy</b>	<b>Carbon Monoxide Awareness</b> 
 <b>Supporting Priority Customer</b>	<b>Services Beyond the Meter</b> 

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# Project registration table

Project summary	
<b>Project title</b>	<b>Warmth and Wellbeing Roadshows</b>
<b>Strategic Area</b>	Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability
<b>Funding GDN(s)</b> The GDN(s) which register(s) the project	Northern Gas Networks (NGN)
<b>New/Updated</b> State whether this is a new or updated PEA (indicate as appropriate by removing the option that does not apply)	New
<b>Collaborative VCMA Projects</b> Specific role(s) of GDN(s) participating in a collaborative VCMA Project	N/A
<b>Date of PEA submission</b> This needs to be the initial date of a first project submission	June 2026
<b>Project start and end date</b>	1 April 2026 – 31 March 2027
<b>Project location</b>	Northumberland (rural communities)
<b>Sectors involved</b>	Distribution Network Operator <b>Gas Distribution Network</b> Consumer Group <b>Charitable Organisation</b> Local Authority Water Supplier Telecommunications Provider Other (specify)
Project contact	
<b>Name</b>	Laura Ratcliffe
<b>Contact details</b>	vcma@northerngas.co.uk
Project partners and third parties involved	
<b>Organisation name</b>	<b>Role</b>
Community Action Northumberland	Lead project partner
Costs and funding	
<b>Total cost (£k)</b>	£10,000
<b>Total VCMA funding required (£k)</b>	<b>£10,000</b>
<b>Total BAU vulnerability and CO safety activity baseline allowance funding by activity (£k)</b>	£0

## Problem(s)

Northern Gas Networks' vulnerability strategy prioritises keeping customers safe, warm and supported, particularly those experiencing fuel poverty, affordability challenges and heightened carbon monoxide (CO) risk. Rural communities face distinct challenges due to limited access to advice services, higher transport costs, inefficient housing stock and increased reliance on alternative heating and cooking methods.

In Northumberland, households experiencing financial hardship are disproportionately affected by rising energy costs, food insecurity and reduced access to preventative safety information. These pressures increase the risk of cold homes, unsafe heating practices and poor nutrition, particularly for vulnerable households who may already be socially isolated.

## Scope and objectives

The Warmth and Wellbeing Roadshows will address fuel poverty, energy affordability and CO safety challenges through a programme of accessible community roadshows and follow up household support across rural Northumberland.

Working with Community Action Northumberland, NGN will support rural households by:

- Delivering community roadshows offering practical energy advice and slow cooker cooking demonstrations
- Providing light touch energy and safety support to attendees
- Raising awareness of carbon monoxide risks and safe heating practices
- Supporting indirect registration to the Priority Services Register (PSR)
- Providing slow cookers, recipe cards and energy saving resources where needed
- Offering follow up household visits for tailored hands on support

The project aims to:

- Reduce household energy costs through practical, energy efficient cooking and heating advice
- Improve household safety by increasing awareness of carbon monoxide risks
- Support vulnerable rural households to access energy safeguarding services, including PSR
- Improve food resilience and nutrition through affordable cooking solutions
- Reach underserved rural communities with preventative, early intervention support

## Project design engagement

### Targeting vulnerability support:

NGN has identified fuel poverty, energy affordability and CO safety as priority vulnerability issues within rural Northumberland through stakeholder engagement and delivery partner insight.

Community Action Northumberland has extensive experience working with rural households facing financial hardship, food insecurity and limited access to advice services.

This project builds on proven delivery models, combining former foodbank slow cooker workshops with energy roadshows to meet multiple vulnerability needs in a single, accessible intervention.

### **Evidence of stakeholder and/or customer support:**

This VCMA Project has been developed in partnership with Community Action Northumberland, drawing on their established delivery experience supporting rural households experiencing fuel poverty, food insecurity and energy affordability challenges across Northumberland. Insight from previous community engagement activity, including slow cooker workshops and energy advice roadshows, highlighted demand for accessible, community based support that combines energy advice, carbon monoxide awareness and practical food resilience measures.

Feedback from frontline engagement identified barriers to accessing traditional advice services in rural areas, including transport challenges and social isolation. The project design responds directly to this evidence by delivering integrated, place based interventions in local community settings, providing holistic support to households facing multiple, overlapping pressures.

### **Stakeholder project design input:**

The project has been developed in partnership with Community Action Northumberland, whose operational insight and frontline delivery experience directly informed the project design. Learning from previous community based slow cooker workshops and energy advice activity shaped the decision to deliver an integrated programme that combines energy advice, carbon monoxide awareness and practical cooking support within local community settings.

Stakeholder input highlighted the importance of face-to-face engagement in rural areas to overcome access barriers such as transport challenges and social isolation. This feedback influenced the use of community roadshows and the inclusion of follow-up household visits to provide tailored support where additional need is identified.

## **Why the project is being funded through the VCMA**

This project meets the VCMA eligibility criteria as it delivers targeted support to households in vulnerable situations and addresses fuel poverty, energy affordability and carbon monoxide safety beyond activities funded through business as usual baseline allowances. The project provides preventative, early intervention support that reduces the risk of harm, improves household safety and supports customers to better manage their energy use.

The project aligns with NGN's vulnerability strategy, which sets out a clear ambition to keep communities safe and warm and to support those most in need, not only in the short term but as NGN invests in a fair transition to a green energy future. By delivering community based, practical support in rural areas, the project responds directly to the needs of households who are at greater risk of being left behind due to affordability pressures, access barriers and housing inefficiency.

This project aligns with four of the objectives of NGN’s vulnerability strategy:

- Help more vulnerable households access energy safeguarding services
- Support customers’ move towards net zero, tailored to their needs and circumstances
- Reduce carbon monoxide harm
- Tackle fuel poverty and energy affordability

To achieve our strategic ambition and realise our objectives, we’ve set four priority delivery areas:

- Providing direct services for customers
- Reducing carbon monoxide harm
- Supporting priority vulnerable groups
- Tackling fuel poverty and affordability

## **How VCMA funding complements or supplements BAU activities**

This VCMA Project builds on NGN’s existing vulnerability and carbon monoxide safety activity funded through baseline allowances by providing additional, preventative support that would not otherwise be delivered through business as usual activity. While BAU activity focuses on core safety responsibilities and reactive interventions, this project allows NGN to take a more proactive, community based approach.

VCMA funding supports the delivery of community roadshows that bring together energy advice, carbon monoxide awareness, safe heating guidance and practical food resilience support in rural areas where access to services can be limited. Activities such as slow cooker demonstrations, the provision of cooking equipment and follow up household visits go beyond BAU provision and help address wider affordability and wellbeing issues alongside safety.

## **For individual GDN VCMA Projects:**

### [Justification for why the project should not be collaborative](#)

This VCMA Project has been designed to respond to the specific needs of rural communities within NGN’s network area, particularly across Northumberland, where households face distinct challenges linked to fuel poverty, access to services and energy affordability. The delivery model is closely aligned to local community infrastructure, venues and existing relationships held by Community Action Northumberland, making it most effective to deliver the project on a single GDN basis.

The project is place based and tailored to local circumstances rather than being a scalable, cross network intervention. Delivering the project collaboratively would reduce its ability to respond flexibly to local needs and would not provide additional value compared to delivery within NGN’s footprint.

### Outcomes, associated actions and success criteria

CAN and NGN 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	Annual Target
Community roadshows offering energy advice and slow cooker workshops	15
Light-touch support provided to attendees	250
Carbon monoxide awareness and safe heating guidance delivered (indirect)	300
CO Surveys	70
Cooking demonstrations and practical guidance on affordable, nutritious meals	12 sessions
Free slow cookers provided where needed	75 households
Slow cooker recipe cards distributed	90 households
Support for households to register for PSR (indirect)	300
PSR sign-ups	50
Practical resources distributed (energy guides, recipes, safety leaflets)	900
Household visits for tailored advice following events	25
Interactive workshops and Q&A sessions	5 sessions

### Success Criteria

#### Priority Services Register (PSR) Support

- 50 PSR sign-ups are completed during events or through follow-up engagement
- 300 households receive indirect support to understand and access the Priority Services Register
- Evidence includes advice logs, signposting records, or inclusion within event reporting

### **Carbon Monoxide (CO) Safety**

- 300 individuals are reached indirectly with CO awareness and safe heating guidance
- Evidence includes group session records, material distribution logs, and event reports
- 70 CO registrations are completed either at events or through follow-up activity
- Registrations are evidenced through anonymised records or partner confirmation

### **Community roadshows**

- All 15 community roadshows are delivered within the agreed project period
- Each roadshow includes both energy advice and a slow cooker workshop, evidenced through agendas, attendance records, and photographs
- Roadshows are delivered in accessible community venues across the project area

### **Household visits**

- 25 household visits are completed following event attendance
- Visits provide tailored advice and hands-on support
- Case studies provided to NGN on QMRs
- Evidence includes visit logs and anonymised outcome summaries

## Potential for new learning

The CAN Warmth and Wellbeing Roadshows project presents a valuable opportunity for Northern Gas Networks (NGN) to enhance its understanding of how to effectively engage, support and safeguard rural and farming communities—audiences that often experience distinct vulnerabilities and barriers to access.

Through direct delivery of roadshows and community engagement activity, NGN will develop deeper insight into:

- the types of fuel-burning appliances used within rural and off-grid households
- the prevalence of solid fuel systems and alternative heating arrangements
- the barriers preventing regular servicing and maintenance, including financial constraints and competing household pressures
- the causes and occurrence of carbon monoxide (CO) risks, such as blocked chimneys, ageing appliances, and incorrect system use

The project adopts a multi-channel engagement approach, including in-person roadshows, community events, digital communications, articles, webinars, and CO alarm distribution. This provides a practical testbed for NGN to assess which engagement methods are most effective in reaching rural communities, influencing safer behaviours, and delivering measurable safety outcomes.

## Aligning with and supporting wider vulnerability approaches

This project aligns with wider vulnerability and customer support strategies across the energy sector, other utilities, and national and local government. It reinforces shared priorities including Priority Services Register (PSR) awareness, carbon monoxide (CO) safety, and supporting households experiencing fuel poverty and energy affordability challenges. The Warmth and Wellbeing Roadshows complement existing industry initiatives—such as fuel poverty programmes and public health campaigns—by extending practical, face-to-face support into rural communities that are often underserved by traditional services.

The project also addresses clear gaps in current provision. Evidence within the project design highlights that rural households frequently face barriers to accessing energy advice and support, including geographic isolation, transport challenges, and social exclusion.

Through a programme of locally delivered roadshows and follow-up household support, the project provides accessible, place-based interventions in trusted community settings. This approach enables NGN to engage directly with households who may not interact with mainstream services, offering

tailored advice on energy efficiency, affordable cooking, CO safety, and access to support mechanisms such as the PSR.

By combining practical demonstrations, targeted advice, and onward support, the project strengthens the overall support landscape—ensuring rural customers can access preventative, holistic assistance that improves both energy resilience and household safety.

## Monitoring and evaluation

NGN will work closely with CAN to monitor delivery, track outputs, and evaluate the overall impact of the project. A shared monitoring framework will be used to ensure consistent data collection, quality assurance, and transparent reporting throughout the project.

**Quarterly reporting:** NGN will compile quarterly updates summarising progress, outcomes, and learning, ensuring transparency and alignment with Ofgem requirements.

**Final evaluation report:** At project completion, NGN and FCN will produce a joint evaluation summarising delivery, impact, customer outcomes, and recommendations for future activity.

## Scale of VCMA project and SROI calculations, including NPV

NGN have applied the Industry Standard Social Value Framework and GDN Rulebook, developed collaboratively, to assess the financial and wellbeing outcomes associated with the project, ensuring consistency and comparability across networks.

Based on forecast outcomes and costs, the project is expected to deliver a Social Return on Investment (SROI) of £4.43 for every £1 invested, demonstrating that the scale of investment is proportionate to the benefits delivered for customers across participating in our network.

### Social value measurement

<b>Total cost*</b>	£10,000
<b>Total gross present value</b>	£52,864.47
<b>Net Present Value (NPV)</b>	£43,126.54
<b>SROI</b>	£4.43

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

## Internal governance and project management evidence

All VCMA project proposals submitted to Northern Gas Networks are subject to a robust internal review and assurance process to ensure strategic alignment, value for money, and compliance with VCMA eligibility criteria.

Where a proposal meets this required criteria, a Social Return on Investment (SROI) calculation is undertaken in line with NGN’s approved methodology to evidence a positive social impact and value for consumers funding the VCMA programme.

They are then sent to an external governance panel for an independent scrutiny. The panel meets quarterly and consists of sector specialists with a good understanding of VCMA. This ensures the project aligns with NGN’s Customers in Vulnerable Situations objectives and delivers meaningful outcomes for households at risk of fuel poverty and vulnerability.

Following approval, the project is managed and overseen by VCMA Project Coordinators at NGN. Ongoing delivery is monitored through a structured performance management framework, which includes:

- Submission of quarterly monitoring reports by the partner organisation, detailing activity, outputs, outcomes, and progress against agreed targets.
- Regular one-to-one meetings between NGN and the project partner to review delivery, address any challenges, and provide ongoing support and assurance, including any risks on delivery and associated mitigation.
- Participation in regular NGN partner network calls, enabling partners to share best practice, learning, and innovative approaches, while supporting continuous improvement across the network.

This approach ensures strong governance, effective delivery oversight, and continuous learning, while maintaining alignment with NGN’s wider VCMA objectives of delivering positive and measurable social impact for customers and communities.

**Initial:**

Approver (Name and Role)	Date
Eileen Brown, Customer Experience Director	April 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 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: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. provide support to consumers in Vulnerable Situations and relate to Energy Safeguarding, or</li> <li>ii. provide support for those most at risk of being left behind in the transition to net zero, or</li> <li>iii. provide awareness of, and education on, the dangers of CO beyond the activities funded as business as usual (BAU) through baseline allowances, or</li> <li>iv. reduce the risk of harm caused by CO</li> </ol>	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 paragraph b;	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> <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 condition<sup>12</sup> that makes them more vulnerable to health risks associated with cold homes; or</li> <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</li> </ul>	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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> <li>ii. ii.</li> <li>iii. 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)</li> </ul>	N/A
Health condition	Either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> <li>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</li> </ul>	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