

Start date: April 2026





PEA reference: V.PC2.53.E5.008.009.We.N

Hope 4 U – NHS Support Services

////////////////////////////////////

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



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

Contents

Contents	2
Project registration table	3
Problem(s).....	4
Scope and objectives	4
Project design engagement.....	4
Why the project is being funded through the VCMA.....	6
How VCMA funding complements or supplements BAU activities.....	7
For individual GDN VCMA Projects:	7
Outcomes, associated actions and success criteria.....	7
Potential for new learning.....	9
Aligning with and supporting wider vulnerability approaches	9
Monitoring and evaluation	10
Scale of VCMA project and SROI calculations, including NPV	10
Internal governance and project management evidence	10
Eligibility Criteria	12

Project registration table

Project summary	
Project title	NHS Support Services
Strategic Area	Supporting Priority Customers
Funding GDN(s) The GDN(s) which register(s) the project	Northern Gas Networks (NGN)
New/Updated State whether this is a new or updated PEA (indicate as appropriate by removing the option that does not apply)	New
Collaborative VCMA Projects Specific role(s) of GDN(s) participating in a collaborative VCMA Project	N/A
Date of PEA submission This needs to be the initial date of a first project submission	June 2026
Project start and end date	1 April 2026 – 31 March 2027
Project location	Airedale General Hospital and Bradford Teaching NHS Hospital
Sectors involved	Distribution Network Operator Gas Distribution Network Consumer Group Delivery partner working directly with NHS maternity services
Project contact	
Name	Laura Ratcliffe
Contact details	vcma@northerngas.co.uk
Project partners and third parties involved	
Organisation name	Role
Northern Cancer Voices	Lead project partner
Costs and funding	
Total cost (£k)	£99,942
Total VCMA funding required (£k)	£99,942
Total BAU vulnerability and CO safety activity baseline allowance funding by activity (£k)	£0

Problem(s)

NGN's vulnerability strategy is focused on keeping customers safe and warm, reducing Carbon Monoxide (CO) harm and supporting those most at risk of fuel poverty or being left behind in the transition to net zero. Within the NGN network, expectant parents and families with very young children experience a heightened risk of financial stress, fuel poverty and unsafe living conditions.

Evidence provided through the Hope 4 U NHS Support Services application demonstrates that pregnancy and early parenthood bring significant additional costs, often at a time when household income reduces. Many households are not financially prepared for these pressures, leading to increased debt, difficulty heating the home adequately and reduced ability to manage energy costs safely. Poverty during pregnancy and early childhood is associated with poor physical and mental health outcomes, including higher risks linked to cold home and CO exposure.

NHs maternity teams are well placed to identify vulnerability early, but do not have the time or specialist knowledge to provide in-depth energy, income maximisation and safeguarding support. Without intervention, vulnerable families risk living in cold, unsafe homes during a critical period for both parent and child.

Scope and objectives

This VCMA project will enable NGN, working in partnership with Hope 4 U and NHS maternity services, to deliver targeted non-judgemental support to expectant and new parents identified as vulnerable. The project will address the problems outlined above through a coordinated package of energy safeguarding, financial resilience and CO awareness activities delivered alongside NHs services.

Key activities include:

- Dedicated energy and vulnerability advice delivered by trained Hope 4 U advisors
- Income maximisation, benefit checks and debt advice to improve affordability
- Priority Services Register (PSR) awareness and registrations
- Carbon monoxide awareness and completion of NGN CO surveys
- Energy efficiency and behavioural change advice to support warm, safe homes
- Low carbon transition (LCT) advice and personal plans where appropriate

The project objectives are to:

- Support vulnerable expectant and new parents to live in warm, safe homes
- Reduce fuel poverty and financial stress through income maximisation and debt support
- Increase awareness of CO risks and reduce the likelihood of CO-related harm
- Improve PSR registrations within vulnerable households on the NGN network
- Provide tailored advice that supports longer-term energy resilience and informed decision-making

Project design engagement

Targeting vulnerability support:

NGN has identified the vulnerability need addressed by this VCMA project through a combination of stakeholder engagement, service data and insight from trusted delivery partners. Evidence from Hope 4 U's existing NHS-linked service delivery demonstrates sustained demand from expectant and new parents experiencing multiple, overlapping vulnerabilities, including low income, fuel poverty, debt, housing instability and health related vulnerability.

Evidence of stakeholder and/or customer support:

The VCMA project has been developed in response to ongoing engagement with NHS stakeholders and delivery partners involved in maternity and community health services. Maternity teams at Airedale General Hospital and Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust have provided direct feedback on the challenges faced for patients, particularly around financial insecurity, energy affordability and the impact of cold or unsafe homes on health and wellbeing.

Stakeholders have consistently highlighted the value of a trusted third-sector partner embedded within NGS referral pathways, enabling non-clinical support needs to be addressed without increasing pressure on frontline health services. Feedback from both NHS professionals and service users indicates that the existing Hope 4 U service improves patient wellbeing, reduces financial stress and supports households to engage with energy safeguarding and support services.

Stakeholder project design input:

Stakeholders have been actively involved in shaping the design of the project through ongoing operational engagement rather than one-off consultation. NHS maternity and community midwifery teams have informed the referral model, ensuring it is simple, proportionate and aligned with existing clinical workflows. This has directly influenced the decision to retain a referral led casework based model rather than broader community outreach, ensuring support is targeted effectively and resources are focused on those most in need.

Why the project is being funded through the VCMA

This project meets this eligibility criteria, as the project aligns with NGNs 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 two of the objectives of our vulnerability strategy:

- **Helping more vulnerable households access energy safeguarding services**, through tailored advice, Priority Services Register awareness and carbon monoxide risk reduction
- **Supporting customers' move towards net zero, tailored to their needs and circumstances**, by providing energy efficiency and low-carbon transition advice that reflects household vulnerability and affordability

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

- **Providing direct services for customers** through intensive, casework-based support delivered by Hope 4 U
- **Reducing carbon monoxide harm** through targeted awareness-raising and survey completion
- **Supporting priority vulnerable groups**, specifically expectant and new parents identified through trusted NHS referral pathways
- **Tackling fuel poverty and energy affordability** through income maximisation, debt advice and energy efficiency interventions

How VCMA funding complements or supplements BAU activities

This VCMA project complements and supplements BAU activity by providing additional, targeted and intensive support that would not otherwise be delivered through baseline funding. In particular the project enables a casework- based service delivered by Hope 4 U and embedded within NHS maternity referral pathways, allowing vulnerability to be identified early and support to be tailored to individual household circumstances.

VCMA funding enables the delivery of:

- Proactive engagement with expectant and new parents identified by NHS professionals as being in vulnerable situations
- Intensive income maximisation, debt advice and energy affordability support beyond the scope of BAU provision
- Extended carbon monoxide awareness activity delivered as part of wider safeguarding conversations rather than standalone messaging
- Holistic support addressing fuel poverty, housing issues and energy efficiency alongside health related vulnerability

These activities go beyond BAU by providing depth, continuity and integration with health services, which are not funded through baseline allowances. VCMA funding therefore enables enhanced outcomes for a priority vulnerable group during a critical life stage.

For individual GDN VCMA Projects:

Justification for why the project should not be collaborative

This VCMA project is not proposed as a collaborative project due to the specific local context, established delivery arrangement and targeted referral pathways within the NGN network area.

The project is delivered in partnership with Hope 4 U and is embedded within NHS maternity and community midwifery services operating across Bradford and Airedale. The referral pathways, stakeholder relationships and service design have been developed locally to reflect the needs of this population and the structure of NHS services within the NGN network area. These are specific to local health systems.

Outcomes, associated actions and success criteria

Key outcomes expected from this project:

Deliverable	Target
Referrals received via NHS maternity services	800
Contacts made	700
PSR awareness	700
PSR registrations	350
Carbon monoxide (CO) awareness	700
CO awareness surveys completion	350
Benefit Checks	280
Energy behaviour change	420
Maternity Grants	280
Energy/water/general debts/social tariff	280

Success Criteria

- Delivers the agreed referral and contact volumes within the funding period
- Demonstrates increased engagement with PSR and CO awareness among vulnerable households
- Achieves measurable financial uplift through benefit checks, debt support and tariff interventions
- Provides robust monitoring data to evidence outcomes and prevent duplication with BAU activity

Potential for new learning

This project provides an opportunity for NGN to further understand how early, targeted intervention through NHS referral pathways can support vulnerable households during pregnancy and early parenthood.

NGN expects to gain insight into:

- How NHS maternity and community midwifery services can support early identification of energy related vulnerability
- The scale and nature of overlapping vulnerabilities experienced by expectant and new parents, including fuel poverty, energy affordability and housing issues
- The impact of intensive, casework based support on engagement with Priority Services Register registrations, CO awareness and income maximisation
- How tailored advice, delivered at a critical life stage, can support longer term energy resilience and informed decision making

Learning will be captured through routine monitoring, outcome reporting and qualitative feedback from Hope 4 U and NHS partners. NGN will use this evidence to inform future VCMA project design, refine targeting approaches for priority vulnerable groups and consider opportunities to adapt or replicate elements of the model within other parts of the NGN network where appropriate.

Aligning with and supporting wider vulnerability approaches

This project aligns with and supports wider approaches to vulnerability taken across the energy sector, health services and local public sector partners by addressing the intersection between health related vulnerability, fuel poverty and energy safety.

The project complements wider government and public sector objectives focused on reducing health inequalities, improving maternal and infant outcomes and preventing avoidable harm associated with cold or unsafe homes. By working alongside NHS services, the project addresses a recognised gap where non clinical issues such as financial hardship, energy affordability and housing conditions impact health outcomes but cannot be addressed directly by health professionals.

Monitoring and evaluation

NGN will work closely with Hope 4 U to monitor the delivery, impact and effectiveness of the VCMA project throughout the funding period.

Hope 4 U will maintain detailed case level records for all households supported through the project. This will include referral source, types of interventions delivered, outcomes achieved and any financial uplift identified through income maximisation or debt support. Data will be captured consistently using Hope 4 U's case management systems to support accurate reporting and auditability.

NGN will use the monitoring data to evaluate whether the project has achieved its intended outcomes, delivered value for money and complemented BAU activity without duplication. Findings will be reported through NGN's VCMA governance processes and used to inform future vulnerability strategy and VCMA project design.

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 £5.71 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

Total cost*	£99,942
Total gross present value	£528,976.96
Net Present Value (NPV)	£450,131.87
SROI	£5.71

*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: <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 	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"> 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: <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. ii. 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) 	N/A
Health condition	Either: <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 	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