



Start date: April 2026





PEA reference: V.FP2.57.C1.006.008.Re.N

Community Energy Ambassador Training

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



 Fuel Poverty and Energy	Carbon Monoxide Awareness 
 Supporting Priority Customer	Services Beyond the Meter 

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Project registration table

Project summary	
Project title	Community Energy Ambassador Training
Strategic Area	Fuel Poverty and Energy Affordability
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	NGN Region
Sectors involved	Distribution Network Operator Gas Distribution Network Consumer Group Charitable Organisation Local Authority Water Supplier Telecommunications Provider Other (specify)
Project contact	
Name	Laura Ratcliffe
Contact details	vcma@northerngas.co.uk
Project partners and third parties involved	
Organisation name	Role
Yorkshire Energy Doctor CIC	Lead project partner
Costs and funding	
Total cost (£k)	£23,500
Total VCMA funding required (£k)	£23,500

Total BAU vulnerability and CO safety activity baseline allowance funding by activity (£k)	£0
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Problem(s)

Northern Gas Networks (NGN) is dedicated to supporting vulnerable customers, tackling fuel poverty, and improving carbon monoxide (CO) safety awareness. This project aligns with NGN's strategic themes: Fuel Poverty & Energy Affordability, Carbon Monoxide Awareness, and Supporting Priority Customers.

Challenges faced by the target community:

- Rising energy costs are increasing the risk of fuel poverty for households across the NGN region.
- Low awareness of CO dangers leaves many at risk of harm.
- Vulnerable and hard-to-reach customers often do not access traditional advice channels, leaving them unsupported.
- Insufficient community-based support means fewer trained ambassadors to identify and assist those most at risk.

This VCMA project addresses these challenges by expanding the reach of energy advice, improving CO safety awareness, and increasing access to safeguarding services for those most in need. The approach reflects NGN's ambition to keep communities safe, warm, and well-informed, both now and as the energy sector transitions to a greener future.

Scope and objectives

Working with Yorkshire Energy Doctor CIC (YED), NGN will:

- Train at least 10 Community Energy Ambassador courses per year
- Deliver tailored energy efficiency advice
- Encourage referrals to the Priority Services Register (PSR)
- Improve CO awareness through questionnaires and information
- Provide follow-up newsletters on energy changes

The above project scope will:

- Support customers in vulnerable situations by improving access to advice
- Reduce fuel poverty through increased energy efficiency awareness and targeted interventions
- Improve CO safety awareness and mitigation
- Deliver measurable benefits across the NGN network

Project design engagement

Targeting vulnerability support:

NGN has identified a clear and growing vulnerability need across the region through a combination of consumer research, stakeholder engagement, and data-driven insight. Evidence from community partners, frontline organisations, and local intelligence shows that fuel affordability pressures continue to rise, with many households struggling to understand energy costs or access appropriate support.

Consumer research undertaken across the NGN network highlights that customers in vulnerable situations—particularly those who are digitally excluded, living in rural areas, or managing long-term financial hardship—face significant barriers in accessing advice on energy efficiency, carbon monoxide (CO) safety, and available safeguarding services. These insights support the case for local, person-centred methods of engagement rather than centralised or digital-only approaches.

NGN's use of data and technology—such as Priority Services Register (PSR) trends, regional vulnerability mapping, and feedback from previous training cohorts—has reinforced the necessity of this intervention. The analysis shows a continued need for proactive support and structured pathways into services such as PSR registration and CO safety education.

Evidence of stakeholder and/or customer support:

NGN and YED have engaged closely with community organisations, local support networks, and previous Energy Ambassador participants to inform the development of this project. Partners consistently reported increasing demand for accessible and community-based energy advice, alongside a need for improved awareness of CO safety. Feedback from past course attendees highlighted the value of practical, easy-to-understand training and confirmed that the ambassador model is an effective way to reach households who are otherwise disconnected from traditional support routes.

Stakeholder project design input:

Stakeholders played an active role in shaping the structure and focus of the project. YED provide expert insight into real-world challenges faced by households, influencing decisions on course content, delivery approach, and engagement methods. Their experience highlighted the importance of including follow-up newsletters, practical advice, and clear referral pathways such as the Priority Services Register (PSR).

Community partners advised on the best approaches for engaging hard-to-reach audiences, which informed the project's emphasis on community-based ambassadors rather than digital-only channels. Feedback also shaped the target outputs, ensuring they are realistic and impactful.

Why the project is being funded through the VCMA

This project fully meets the VCMA eligibility criteria and is closely aligned with NGN's vulnerability strategy. It is designed to deliver direct support to vulnerable households, going beyond business-as-usual activities and addressing gaps in energy advice and carbon monoxide (CO) safety awareness.

This project aligns with all four objectives of our vulnerability strategy:

- Helping more vulnerable households access energy safeguarding services
- Supporting customers' move towards net zero, tailored to their needs and circumstances
- 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

The Community Energy Ambassador Training project supplements, rather than duplicates, NGN's business-as-usual (BAU) vulnerability and CO safety activities. While BAU activities focus primarily on statutory emergency response, CO incident management, and essential safeguarding processes, they do not provide the depth of community-based energy education, proactive engagement, or capacity-building required to reach hard-to-engage households.

VCMA funding enables NGN to extend support beyond what is possible through baseline allowances by:

- Providing structured energy advice and training that goes beyond reactive BAU services.
- Building community capacity via trained Energy Ambassadors who can deliver ongoing, localised support that BAU teams are not resourced to provide.
- Enhancing CO awareness outreach through questionnaires, local engagement, and follow-up communications—activities that exceed statutory CO obligations.
- Increasing reach into vulnerable and isolated communities, which BAU teams may not routinely interact with due to operational priorities.
- Supporting proactive safeguarding, including PSR referrals, rather than relying solely on customers self-identifying during BAU interactions.

For individual GDN VCMA Projects:

Justification for why the project should not be collaborative

The Community Energy Ambassador Training project is specific to the needs, context, and existing community infrastructure within the NGN region. Evidence from NGN’s stakeholder engagement and project request materials shows that Yorkshire Energy Doctor CIC already delivers well-established, locally tailored support within NGN communities, and their delivery model is shaped around regional demographics, local networks, and area-specific vulnerability patterns.

Because of this, the project would not achieve the same impact if delivered collaboratively across multiple GDNs.

Outcomes, associated actions and success criteria

YED 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
PSR Referrals	100
CO Awareness Questionnaires	150
Energy Efficiency Advice	2,000
Community Energy Ambassador Courses	10
Cost Savings to Residents	Over £10,000

Success Criteria

- Achievement of stated annual targets
- Evidence of improved customer awareness and behaviour change
- Positive feedback from ambassadors and community partners

Potential for new learning

NGN expects to learn:

- Best practices for community-led energy advice
- Effectiveness of ambassador networks

- Insights for scaling energy affordability support

Learnings will be shared internally and with cross-industry partners.

Aligning with and supporting wider vulnerability approaches

The Community Energy Ambassador Training project directly supports and aligns with wider approaches to vulnerability used across the energy industry, other utilities, and key consumer-facing organisations. It reflects recognised good practice by focusing on early intervention, community-embedded support, and improved access to safeguarding services—approaches that are widely endorsed across local, national, and devolved government strategies.

At a cross-industry level, the project mirrors the broader shift toward empowering trusted local organisations to deliver advice and support. Yorkshire Energy Doctor CIC already works extensively across the NGN region with housing providers, charities, and community groups, demonstrating the value of partnership models that build capacity within the community rather than relying solely on centralised services. This aligns with established best practice across the utility sector and complements national priorities around reducing fuel poverty and improving carbon monoxide (CO) safety.

Monitoring and evaluation

NGN will work closely with YED to monitor delivery, measure impact, and evaluate the effectiveness of the project throughout the 12-month delivery period. Monitoring arrangements are designed to ensure activities are delivered as planned, targets are achieved, and support is reaching those who need it most.

- Quarterly reports
- Financial monitoring
- Quality assurance checks through ongoing partner communication and review of supporting evidence.
- SROI and impact evaluation, using data gathered throughout delivery to assess social value in line with VCMA governance expectations.

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 £4.92 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*	£23,500
Total gross present value	£268,351.90
Net Present Value (NPV)	£223,023.38
SROI	£4.92

*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
<p>Unsafe pipework and essential gas appliance repair or replacement must meet the following criteria:</p>	<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. 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) 	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Health condition</p>	<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>Funding</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>N/A</p>