

Warm Welcome Spaces Surrey

Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance

October 2023

SGN



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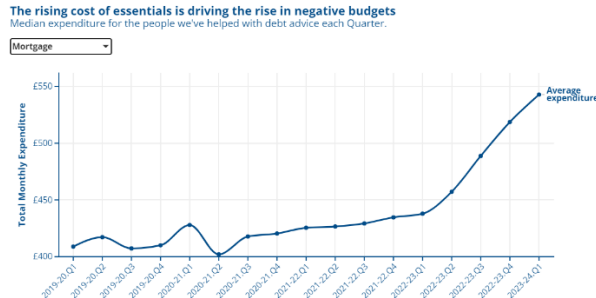
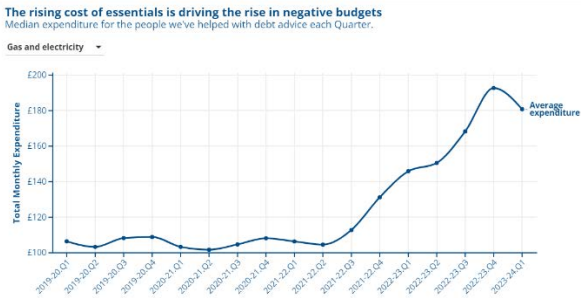
1 Description

Funding GDN(s)	SGN
For Collaborative VCMA Projects:	N/A
Date of PEA submission:	October 2023
Project contact name:	Kerry Potter
Project contact number/email:	Kerry.potter@sgn.co.uk
Total cost (£k)	£500,000
Total VCMA funding required (£k)	£150,000

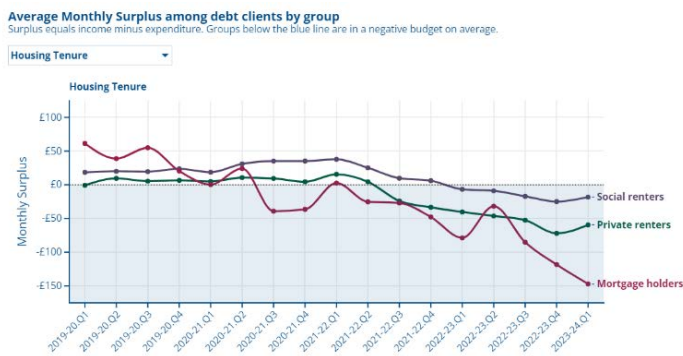
2 Problem statement

The effects of the energy price cap rise in October 2022 are still being felt by customers and millions of British households are currently in fuel poverty. Last year, there were an estimated 13.4 per cent of households (3.26 million) in fuel poverty in England, with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero estimating that this year, fuel poverty will increase to 14.4 per cent (3.53 million). Lower income households are more likely to respond to higher energy prices by cutting energy use below safe levels. Some will find themselves in the situation where energy will become unaffordable, resulting in self-disconnection or unmanageable energy debt.

Surrey has 21 areas of high need as identified by the Surrey Deprivation Index ([Key Neighbourhoods – Surrey-i \(surreyi.gov.uk\)](http://surreyi.gov.uk)). Tens of thousands of residents who live in these areas will experience fuel poverty once again this winter, many of whom will already be vulnerable residents, and at risk of exacerbated ill health or death due to the inability to keep their homes properly heated because of rising energy costs. Although energy tariffs are expected to drop over the coming months, the cost-of-living crisis has added more pressures to customers, in particular private renters and mortgage holders, and the small decrease in energy costs is not enough to bring families out of fuel poverty.

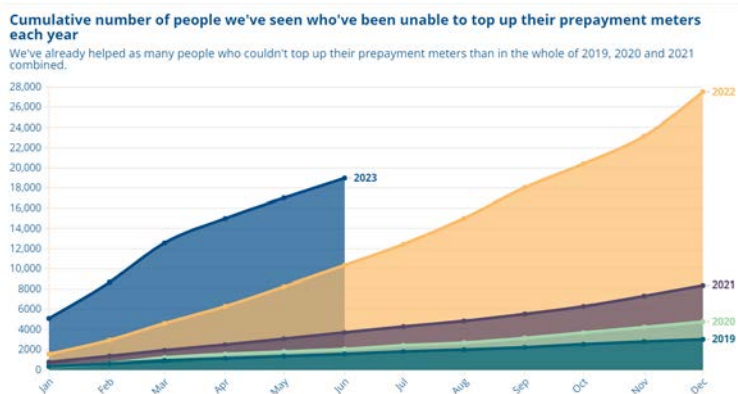


The percentage of mortgage holders in a negative budget each month has increased sharply from 32.63% in 2019 to 56.47% for the same period in 2023. The average monthly budget surplus for mortgage holders is now minus £147 and means that these customers are likely to try reducing other costs, such as energy, to offset the increase in mortgage rates.



Warm Welcome Spaces Surrey

Data from Citizen’s Advice has shown that in 2022, they helped as many people who couldn't top up their prepayment meters than in the whole of 2019, 2020 and 2021 combined. 2023 has already started to overtake these figures, and points to an ongoing increase in difficulties for prepayment customers.



This year, we are seeing an increased impact on residents with disabilities and long-term medical conditions. The British Medical Journals highlighted the impact of cold homes on these residents in its 2022 report stating:

“We know, for example, that living with a terminal illness or being dependent on medical equipment results in higher-than-average energy needs and therefore, costlier energy bills, leading to a choice for some between “oxygen and heating.” The evidence from our work and the work of others, including those we consult with as part of a national Health and Housing Working Group, is clear: a warm, safe home is essential to good health, comfort, and wellbeing. Colder homes lead to new physical and mental health conditions, as well as exacerbating existing health problems. The cost of this to the health service runs into the billions each year, and thousands of people die each winter because they cannot keep warm and well at home.”

The Surrey Coalition of Disabled People published a report on the impact of the Cost-of-Living Crisis on residents with disabilities in Surrey. 62% of respondents did not make use of community fridges, warm hubs and foodbanks and 76% did not turn on their heating last winter. The individual feedback indicates worrying trends amongst our most vulnerable residents.

“I worry about using my CPAP machine all night because of the cost so have started only using it half the night”

“I am not able to access things like warm banks because I struggle to sit upright for long and would be in excruciating pain. I can't use food banks because I can't be jumping through the hoops required to access them. Even with my car, I only drive for groceries or medical/health related reason - scared to go out if I won't be back by 3pm because I'll lose the closest parking space and I don't have the electric wheelchair I need because I can't manually propel. I basically stay in bed 90-95% of the time now as I can barely stand or walk for more than a few minutes, even inside my home. I can't see a way out of this, and my life isn't worth living anymore”

Gas Safe Register’s 2023 research has found that nearly a third (31%) of UK residents will skip booking their annual gas safety check this year, due to the cost-of-living crisis. Their analysis of their latest gas safety inspection figures reveals that one in every five UK homes contain potentially dangerous gas appliances. However, with the average boiler service costing £90-125, it will be outside the budget of many this year.

SCC’s Health and Wellbeing report on 5 targeted locations across the county highlights that although Surrey is seen as an affluent county, there are areas where the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis are being felt more acutely. Using this data, we anticipate that these areas are most likely to need support like proactive gas safety checks and boiler servicing.

	Surrey-wide*	5 targeted locations**
Regularly not being able to afford full grocery shop	7.3%	24%
Regularly skipping meals/reducing meal size	7.2%	19%
Regularly gone to a public space to use energy/heating	1.2%	14%
Gone to a foodbank	<1%	37.5%
Gone to a community cafe / food club	4%	59%

3 Scope and objectives

Working in partnership with Surrey County Council, we will build on the support framework implemented last year, which proactively offers information to all Surrey residents on how to stay safe and warm in winter. This will be achieved by providing useful information to all residents as well as building the capacity to facilitate the use of warm, welcoming spaces across the county to support residents in energy crisis this winter.

In reviewing last year's initiative, Warm Welcome venue locations have been mapped and reviewed to ensure maximum resident uptake and will be prioritised in and around areas of high need as identified by the deprivation index, as well as in areas identified as most in need by front line workers. These spaces will provide vulnerable residents living in hard-to-heat homes, and those experiencing fuel poverty, with a welcoming location at which they can warm up and have a free hot drink, whilst receiving energy and financial support advice. Based on last year's feedback, we would also like to organise events at the venues which are tailored to different groups in the community, which will encourage higher footfall and extend the reach of our support.

Through the Warm Welcome Spaces, we aim to support a minimum of 34,000 vulnerable households finding it difficult to keep warm this winter, providing tailored advice and support provisions to improve the health, wellbeing, and financial outcomes for those households.

The spaces will be delivered through a mix of volunteers, Surrey County Council staff, and charity partners. The Warm Welcome Spaces sessions will take place in a mix of venues, including libraries, church halls, and community centres, and will all offer as standard:

- A place for a hot drink, social interaction, and wellbeing activities. Free meals will be provided where possible, depending on facilities available
- Energy advice and debt support from trained advisers
- Winter essentials including items to help vulnerable residents stay warm such as electric blankets, hot water bottles, socks, gloves, and a flask which can be refilled at the hub and taken home
- A catalogue of support services and resources to signpost residents to additional support
- Mental Health First Aid trained volunteers who can identify residents in need of support and signpost them to the correct health services
- An electric blanket testing and replacement service to ensure residents aren't using unsafe electrical equipment due to lack of funds to replace them
- Emergency support for those in fuel crisis through provision of fuel vouchers
- Surrey Fire and Rescue Service visits to offer fire safety and carbon monoxide advice, as well as the offer of home visits to fit smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.

What we will offer the Warm Welcome Space this year:

- Information on how to organise and run a warm welcome space
- A social media advertising fact sheet and how to guide to increase attendance
- Flyers, posters and online advertising through the SCC website and Schools' Bulletin
- A network with the other venues to share best practice and tips
- A catalogue of external organisations for signposting
- Mental Health First Aid training for Warm Welcome Spaces volunteers
- Winter Supplies - Electric Blankets, Gloves, Socks, Flasks, and Wheat bags
- External provider sessions on Energy Advice and Debt Support
- Reporting templates for recording key information
- Signposting for community transport links

This year, we would also like to increase focus on supporting people who cannot leave their home to visit a warm welcome venue, as well as hospital discharge patients - whilst these residents are already at increased risk due to poor health, data has indicated that a significant proportion don't have a functional heating system which can delay discharge and/or prevent them receiving care within their home.

We know that in the current financial climate, many households are unable to afford annual boiler servicing, leading to an increased risk of equipment failing. Through both the “at home” and Warm Welcome venues, we propose to pilot a free boiler servicing scheme for low-income households where someone lives with a health condition made worse by living in a cold and unhealthy home. This will be linked to local authority grant and loan schemes which residents can access where the servicing identifies the need for urgent repair or replacement of heating equipment.

Based on last year’s successful campaign we are looking to expand the offer and support more residents.

4 Why the project is being funded through the VCMA

This partnership will provide support across Surrey on energy safeguarding, ensuring that those who are at risk of living in a cold and unhealthy home have access to key support services to alleviate fuel poverty.

In addition, the partnership looks to support at risk vulnerable customers on to the Priority Services Register as well as provide carbon monoxide (CO) alarms where needed as well as CO safety advice. The services will work collaboratively with expert agencies to maximise positive impacts beyond energy, increasing the health and wellbeing of the individual supported and delivering defined outcomes.

This partnership has been externally assured by SIA partners for Social Return on Investment.

5 Evidence of stakeholder/customer support

5.1 SGNs Vulnerable Steering Group (VSG)

Our VSG has helped us shape our vulnerability strategy and our priorities for GD2 and how best to utilise the VCMA to help those most at risk of living in a cold and unhealthy home. It is with guidance and support from our dedicated VSG that SGN use data to prioritise and target communities most likely to be living in a cold and unhealthy home, in particular those living with a health condition made worse by living in a cold and damp home. This partnership is built on data and covers both geographic areas where there is compelling data that identifies vulnerable customer needs, both due to fuel poverty and health indicators.

As we’ve progressed our portfolio of projects throughout GD2 our strategic steering group reiterated the vital impact we could have by co-ordinating our activities with others to support those most in need, those most impacted by the cost of living and energy cost crisis. The VSG have recommended that we look at ways in which we can build stronger links with other organisations including collaborating with local authorities, utilities, health services and charities to deliver support services that tackle the fuel poverty gap and the underlying causes of fuel poverty.

The VSG we’re delighted to see the initial VCMA partnership with Surrey County Council shared as best practice in the VCMA Annual Report and VCMA Annual Showcase where it was highlighted for its successful collaboration with a local authority and grass root community groups delivering much valued support during winter 2022/23.

5.2 Surrey County Council – stakeholder feedback

Our experience of delivering the warm hubs scheme last year demonstrated to us that the need for this support across our communities is far higher than we had expected, and the feedback received further highlighted how much of a difference it made to residents’ lives. Beyond just the benefits relating to energy and carbon monoxide safety, the hubs provided much wider benefits around mental health, building lasting networks of relationships within local communities. Extending the support this year to bring more support to residents in their homes, and particularly the boiler servicing scheme, is an exciting opportunity for us to extend our reach and provide upstream support that prevents a resident from finding themselves in a crisis situation this winter.

5.3 Warm Hubs Surrey 2022/23 customer feedback

‘We have found that there are a variety of people who use the warm hub. There are lots of lonely, isolated people who live alone and love coming to access good free food and have a friendly conversation with someone in a relaxed warm space. There are people with housing problems, and others with mental health illnesses.’ Talking Tree hub, Staines-Upon-Thames

‘The family after-school club has been a particularly successful part of Warm Wednesdays. A regular core of families attends and appreciate the warmth, the activities for children (using different children's entertainers each week) and the hot meal.’ Epsom Methodist Church

6 Outcomes, associated actions and success criteria

6.1 Outcomes

The collaborative funding of the Surrey partnership will enable the community engagement of all residents within Surrey on keeping safe and warm this winter as well as providing a community resource that supports those in energy crisis. The in-community resources including Warm Welcome Spaces will be established in communities identified as most in need as identified by deprivation data. The partnership will be embedded within the community working closely and collaboratively alongside Citizens Advice, Surrey Fire and Rescue, health care workers, consumer advocates, and utility company representatives to address the barriers clients face to maintaining a safe and warm home.

The Warm Welcome Spaces project provides the following outcomes for Surrey residents.

- Be provided with current information on the help available in Surrey this winter and offered access to support should they need help to maintain a safe and warm home
- Be offered a safe and warm place with access to a hot drink (a meal where facilities are available) and advisory services designed to increase household income and keep safe and warm this winter
- Be supported with critical primary needs, energy and debt support where needed
- Be supported to join the Priority Services Register where eligible - providing them with the security and support they would need in the event of an unplanned outage from all their regional utility companies.
- Be more aware of the risks of Carbon Monoxide and how to mitigate these
- Have reduced stress, and improved health and wellbeing as a direct result of coming together in a community setting to access help and enjoy activities in a warm environment.

6.2 Success Criteria

We are collaborating to deliver reliable information to every Surrey resident and extending in-community assistance to individuals facing a higher risk of enduring fuel poverty and energy crises this winter. Our objective is to facilitate the following customer results, which have been instrumental in shaping our social return on investment analysis.

To gauge the effectiveness of our initiative, we will assess outcomes such as participation in the Warm Welcome Spaces, the service most valued and utilised by Warm Welcome Spaces attendees, and the collection of data on service utilization, encompassing demographics, vulnerabilities, and requirements.

This year we hope to build upon last year’s criteria and expand them to reflect a larger impact.

Target Figures	Total Households Supported
Number of households provided with information / advice on winter resilience planning, the Priority Services Register (PSR), carbon monoxide (CO) safety, and energy efficiency advice – including promotion of where to get help	256,000
Number of people attending/receiving hot drink and warm space	34,000
Fuel Vouchers to be distributed	1,000

Winter Essentials to be distributed	5,000
CO safety conversations and information about in home safety	4,697
CO Alarms distributed	250
Customers supported with personalised energy & debt advice (in person /online)	5,000
In-home support scheme – residents supported	1,971
Food and Meal Support	4,000
Electric blanket new / check and advice	150
Households provided with free boiler service	500

7 Project partners and third parties involved

SGN – regional gas network providing programme funding and support to the delivery team, including training, access to broader referral partners, and direct services for customers including but not limited to Locking Cooker Valves and CO alarms.

Surrey County Council and 11 districts and Boroughs which are as follows:

- Elmbridge Borough Council
- Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
- Guildford Borough Council
- Mole Valley District Council
- Reigate and Banstead Borough Council
- Runnymede Borough Council
- Spelthorne Borough Council
- Surrey Heath Borough Council
- Tandridge District Council
- Waverley Borough Council
- Woking Borough Council

Citizens Advice – Warm Welcome Spaces delivery partner providing a dedicated team to support customers who attend the Warm Welcome Spaces with debt support and income maximisation.

Surrey Community Action – A local charity providing energy advice to residents through their “warmth matters” programme.

Foodbank and Clothes Banks - On the Surrey Energy Advice tool that is available for residents to get information around where their nearest Warm Welcome Spaces is and energy advice, there will be information regarding where the nearest Foodbank and clothes bank is to their local town.

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) - Will be providing flyers around winter safety with information on how to stay fire safe this winter with the rising costs of living. They will also be visiting and advertising their safe and well visits at Warm Welcome Spaces. SFRS will be leading on the installation of CO alarms and CO safety conversations.

Surrey Trading Standards Team – Will be providing an electric blanket testing and replacement scheme for residents at our Warm Welcome Spaces, to ensure that electrical items used to keep warm over winter are not a fire risk and are energy efficient.

Surrey Crisis Fund/Fuel Bank – Will be offering residents in immediate crisis with fuel vouchers and advice.

8 Potential for new learning

Monitoring and evaluation

To ensure effective monitoring and evaluation of project advancements and outcomes, the following measures will be implemented:

- Systematic reporting and monitoring of quantitative and qualitative outcomes.
- Tracking and monitoring of both incoming and outgoing referrals from and to our partners and related services.
- Regular reporting of feedback, indicators, outputs, and outcomes on a quarterly basis.
- Effective management of project progress, involving monthly and quarterly partner meetings aimed at sharing insights, addressing challenges, and presenting individual and organizational partnership case studies.

Learning

Our commitment to learning extends to integrating insights from this project as well as experiences gained from other Warm Welcome Spaces initiatives across the UK. We are committed to exploring how successes can be seamlessly integrated into future endeavours. To facilitate this:

- An annual report will be disseminated across electricity, gas, and water networks, outlining project impacts, and sharing case studies.
- A comprehensive review of data and community feedback will guide enhancements for the winter of 2023/24. This review will include assessing the energy efficiency of host buildings and identifying opportunities to bolster the service's financial sustainability through local business involvement, community volunteers, and diversified funding sources.

9 Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations

We've worked with leading social impact research consultancy SIA Partners to carry out an assessment of the financial and wellbeing outcomes applicable to our services for vulnerable customers incorporated in this partnership.

Carrying out an in-depth assessment with Surrey County Council, and SGN using common industry tools including the DNO/GDN proxy bank and rule books, they forecast a positive net social return of £5.22 as detailed below.

Social Value Measurement

5-year figures		
Economic	Total cost	£500,000.00
	Total gross present value	£3,107,603.53
	NPV	£2,607,603.53
	SROI	£5.22
	Gross present value per person*	£12.14

*GPV per person lower due to the direct mailer reaching 256,000 people.

10 VCMA Project start and end date

The project will run from November 2023 to March 2024

11 Geographic area

Surrey

12 Approval

Maureen McIntosh - Director of Customer Services