

# Warm and Well Networks in Lambeth

March 2024  
SGN



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# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Problem statement</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Scope and objectives</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Why the project is being funded through the VCMA</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Evidence of stakeholder/customer support</b>	<b>5</b>
5.1	Community Support Services – Repowering London experience	5
5.2	Empowering Community Leads – Repowering London feedback	6
5.3	SGNs Vulnerability Steering Group (VSG)	6
<b>6</b>	<b>Outcomes, associated actions and success criteria</b>	<b>7</b>
6.1	Outcomes	7
6.2	Success Criteria	7
<b>7</b>	<b>Project partners and third parties involved</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Potential for new learning</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>VCMA Project start and end date</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Geographic area</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Internal governance and project management evidence</b>	<b>9</b>

## 1 Description

<b>Project title</b>	Warm and Well Networks in Lambeth
<b>Funding GDN(s)</b>	SGN
<b>New/Updated (indicate as appropriate)</b>	New
<b>Date of PEA submission:</b>	March 2024
<b>Project contact name:</b>	Janet Duggan
<b>Project contact email:</b>	janet.duggan@sgn.co.uk
<b>Total cost (£k)</b>	£221,275.50
<b>Total VCMA funding required (£k)</b>	£207,888.50

## 2 Problem statement

The UK's energy prices have been reported to have almost doubled since 2021, and in 2022 there were an estimated 3.26 million households living in fuel poverty in England, based on the LILEE metric (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, 2023). This is an increase from 3.1 million in 2021 and doesn't take into consideration the cost-of-living crisis that has hit households throughout the winter of 2022-23 and beyond.

National Energy Action's October 2023 figures show 6.5 million UK households are in fuel poverty, based on the definition of low-income households spending more than 10% of their income on their energy bills. Fuel poverty is driven by energy efficiency, energy costs and income. It is recognised that nearly half of low-income households are still living in hard to heat homes, and the rate of improvements was well below what is needed to lift people out of fuel poverty by a target date of 2030.

Living in a cold home has significant and demonstrable direct and indirect health impacts. There is strong evidence that shows it is associated with poor health outcomes and an increased risk of morbidity and mortality for all age groups (Public Health England).

The average fuel poverty gap for UK households – the reduction in required fuel bill that an average fuel poor household needs in order to not be classed as fuel poor – increased from £254 in 2021 to £338 in 2022. This means that households in fuel poverty are making increasingly difficult trade-offs and debt management becomes increasingly complex.

A variety of intersecting factors shape the experience of fuel poverty, including housing tenure, spoken languages, disability, gender, and ethnicity. Households falling into multiple intersecting categories of vulnerability are disproportionately affected by fuel poverty, but many of the most vulnerable households also fall through the gaps of national or local assistance schemes, receiving little or no support.

Lambeth is a dense inner London borough with 31% of its population living in areas of high deprivation (2016 census data). It is also ethnically diverse, with 63% of residents describing their ethnicity as other than White British. Ethnic minority households are more likely to experience fuel poverty, and they are also more likely to be affected by specific energy vulnerability pathways such as less affordable variable tariffs,<sup>1</sup> which can be tackled through energy advice.

Trust is a critical factor in delivering effective support and building capacity among households facing intersectional exclusions. A recent study of qualitative data from ten different European countries found that a

<sup>1</sup> Amish Sarpotdar and Manon Burbidge. (2022). "Energy Injustice and Ethnic Minorities in the United Kingdom". CREDS. <https://www.creds.ac.uk/energy-injustice-and-ethnic-minorities-in-the-united-kingdom/>

lack of trust in both public and private institutions is widespread among energy-poor households – “while some interviewees do trust single individuals within institutions, others trust only their own social networks.”<sup>2</sup>

Repowering London’s experience of working with locally rooted community leads and volunteers has highlighted this essential role of trusted relationships – friends, neighbours, or other social connections are often best placed to share advice and information within hardly reached communities. Integrated energy support provided in community often includes debt support, benefits checks, legal support and statutory services, which can be time and resource intensive to deliver for vulnerable customer groups.

Repowering London have been embedded in Lambeth communities for more than a decade, providing residents and trusted networks with access to support services that help alleviate fuel poverty, and developing engagement methods that work with communities who do not necessarily have trust in statutory services. In recent years, the team have supported vulnerable residents through complex cases and have developed a particularly strong understanding around risks and consumer rights in relation to prepayment meters. Repowering London has also developed a successful programme of knowledge and capacity-building initiatives to effectively build capacity and support for underrepresented communities.

The Repowering London team are continuing to see increasing complexity in the lived experience of people living in Lambeth. This means that access to support services including energy advice is impacted by people living in extreme poverty, to provide a holistic household level of support the team are seeing a need to help with primary energy crisis needs first which takes time, trust, resources and experience.

### 3 Scope and objectives

By working in partnership with Repowering London the objective of the partnership is to work with vulnerable households in Lambeth to enable them to address the underlying causes of fuel poverty, helping those most vulnerable and at risk of living in a cold and unhealthy home.

Through the partnership we will work closely with community leads and voluntary sector support groups, joining forces to help vulnerable customers access practical schemes that will make a measurable impact on fuel poverty.

The partnership will offer a year-round service with an enhanced delivery over the winter periods, where there is a greater need to provide practical support to keep residents safe and warm through local activities.

The initiative looks to support vulnerable households by:

- Providing frontline workers with training to increase knowledge and resources to identify and support households in energy crisis, leveraging existing social services and voluntary sector networks to fight fuel poverty more effectively
- Providing in-person energy support workshops for residents to build energy knowledge and confidence that they can share with their friends, neighbours, and other social networks; this includes training and distribution of advice materials on energy efficiency and rights, DIY draughtproofing, income maximisation, the Priority Services Register (PSR), carbon monoxide (CO) safety, and smart meters
- Providing in-home support on CO safety so that VCSE groups have the information and support to access information on CO and where required provide free CO alarms, on the Priority Services Register and support where required to help identified vulnerable households to sign up for support and, for households in fuel poverty access additional support on how to reduce energy costs safely and efficiently and were eligible support with the delivery of proactive boiler servicing and onward referral into energy efficiency measure schemes.

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<sup>2</sup> Katrin Grossmann et al. (2021). “The critical role of trust in experiencing and coping with energy poverty: Evidence from across Europe”. *Energy Research & Social Science*, Volume 76, 102064, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2021.102064>.

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

This project will deliver direct advice and support for residents in fuel poverty through workshops and referrals, whilst building confidence and capacity within existing networks to create wider impact. This project will deliver a positive Social Return on Investment through energy advice as well as the promotion and uptake of key services such as the PSR, CO safety, and smart meter awareness.

This partnership service goes above and beyond our core responsibilities as a Gas Distribution Network and is eligible under the VCMA funding criteria as it will provide energy crisis support, access to energy efficiency and CO advice, empowering vulnerable households to use energy safely, efficiently, and affordably.

This partnership aligns to the SGN commitment to deliver support services for customers aligned to our four strategic pillars:

1. Services Beyond the Meter
2. Supporting Priority Customer Groups
3. **Fuel Poverty & Energy Affordability**
4. Carbon Monoxide Awareness

This project aligns to strategic pillars 3 (with outcomes in 2 and 4).

## 5 Evidence of stakeholder/customer support

### 5.1 Community Support Services – Repowering London experience

Repowering London brings more a decade of experience engaging with people experiencing fuel poverty on energy topics. The Repowering London team delivered the UK's first community-owned renewable energy infrastructure on an urban social housing estate in 2011 and has gone on to support the development of ten community energy cooperatives in deprived urban areas. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, and concluding in early 2022, Repowering London brought this experience to the delivery a wrap-around Community Support Service (CSS) for Lambeth households in energy crisis. Support for households incorporated:

- Income maximisation advice, including emergency fuel vouchers, Warm Homes Discount, Thames Water Discounts, crisis grants from Lambeth Mutual Aid and similar local organisations, education on emergency credit, friendly hours credit, and ongoing liaison with Income Max on behalf of a small group of clients to support grant applications
- Tariff advice, including review of meter/tariff types and discussion of changing to a Smart prepayment meter, providing information during multiple supplier collapse, and signposting to Big London Energy Switch information
- Energy efficiency improvements and behavioural change advice, including the provision of slow cookers and cookbooks either directly or through a referral organisation

In 2021, this service directly generated more than £31k of financial benefit across 175 vulnerable households, with many clients resolving long-term debts and reporting increased confidence in advocating for themselves with support from Repowering London. The team were also able to support a small number of very vulnerable clients to be reconnected to their gas supply after multiple years of disconnection by addressing the issues that caused disconnection in the first instance.

Building on this experience, Repowering London continues to create advocacy opportunities and to elevate the voices of those with lived experience of fuel poverty. In Autumn 2022, for example, Repowering London convened a participatory workshop with senior Ofgem officials, including the CEO, and a number of historic CSS clients.

Repowering London brings this experience of providing a wrap-around service to the effective design and delivery of the Warm and Well Networks in Lambeth partnership.

## 5.2 Empowering Community Leads – Repowering London feedback

Repowering London has a strong track record of building knowledge and capacity to address challenges in the energy system. A 2022 survey of members and volunteers supported across our community energy co-operatives found that participants reported increased knowledge, experience, and confidence thanks to their involvement with Repowering London. 92% of respondents, for example, agreed that they had built knowledge and experience in community organising and engagement.

As Repowering London began to strategically reposition our fuel poverty support programmes away from one-to-one advice and towards wider capacity-building, they ran a volunteer programme for ten young mums in Lambeth in 2021-2022. Participants completed a range of training sessions, including Understanding Fuel Poverty and Health: Impacts on Mental Health; Changing Energy Related Behaviour; Vulnerability in the Energy Market; Warm Welcome (focusing on new families). Three participants also went on to successfully completed the City and Guilds Level 2 Fuel Debt in the Community qualification.

Along with sharing the information they gained within their own networks, this cohort of volunteers engaged with two other key strands of Repowering London's work:

Collaborating to run Repowering London's first Creative Energy Club, held over the half term holidays so that they and their children could create artwork to co-produce energy advice materials.

Contributing to the development and dissemination of materials for a winter awareness- raising campaign with National Energy Action, which resulted in essential energy information being shared with more than 1000 people across two boroughs. One of the volunteers from this cohort also went on to take up a permanent, paid role with Repowering London, as a Lambeth Community Lead.

Building on the successes of the first volunteer programme cohort, Repowering London hosted a "Summer School of Power and Organising" in Lambeth in August 2023. This family-friendly programme included training on community organising skills, energy efficiency and rights, income maximisation, and community energy opportunities. The Summer School was so well received by participants that the programme has continued beyond its initial scope, in the form of recurring "Ideas Factory" sessions at Papa's Café on Thursday afternoons. Summer school participants have been empowered to self-organise skill sharing sessions, and the "Ideas Factory" become a constructive community space for local residents to share their ideas and support. Repowering London will leverage this growing "Ideas Factory" network to reach new audiences through the energy support workshops planned through the Warm and Well Networks in Lambeth partnership.

## 5.3 SGNs Vulnerability Steering Group (VSG)

Our Vulnerable Steering Group has helped us shape our vulnerability strategy and our priorities for GD2 from strategy into delivery. With their guidance we intend to prioritise key initiatives to support our most vulnerable customers.

With a data driven approach to identify communities most likely to suffer detriment from living in a cold and unhealthy home, it was identified that we should prioritise programmes that support vulnerable households, and provide tailored community engagement that empowers both residents and frontline workers in Lambeth to address the underlying causes of fuel poverty.

In 2023 our strategic steering group re-iterated the vital impact we could have by co-ordinating our activities with others to identify and support those most in need, those most impacted by the cost of living and energy cost crisis.

## 6 Outcomes, associated actions and success criteria

### 6.1 Outcomes

Working together, the two-year project will enable SGN and Repowering London to:

- Empower residents and frontline workers to advocate for a fairer energy system within their networks, whilst delivering practical training and support that can have a more immediate impact for households in fuel poverty
- Frontline workers report increased understanding and confidence around fuel poverty support, and are able to make additional referrals for vulnerable households in fuel poverty
- Participants at community capacity-building workshops are provided with information and resources to help them remain warm and well at home
- Participants at community capacity-building workshops report increased understanding and confidence around energy and CO safety, key services, and additional support available; participants report sharing knowledge and resources within their own social networks
- A wider network of consumers receive information and resources to help them stay warm and well at home
- Residents are supported to access additional help to maintain a safe and warm home, such as proactive boiler servicing, debt management, Heat Doctor services, and ECO-4 energy efficiency upgrades, emergency fuel vouchers and CO alarms
- Residents are supported to join the Priority Services Register, where eligible

### 6.2 Success Criteria

This project will aim to deliver the following customer outcomes over the course of the partnership, with a particular focus on leveraging trusted relationships to support hardy reached communities:

- 3,900 customers receive information on energy advice, income maximisation, and CO safety through trusted community and social networks
- 450 frontline workers are provided with training and resources to support and refer customers in fuel poverty
- 65 workshops delivered
- 780 customers receive in-person energy and income maximisation advice, PSR conversations, CO awareness sessions, smart meter awareness
- 300 customers provided with emergency fuel vouchers (value of £49 per voucher)
- 150 households supported to join the PSR
- 130 customers provided with a CO alarm
- 100 households provided with proactive boiler servicing
- 130 customers referred for free retrofit measures assessments (ECO-4 assessments not funded through the VCMA)

## 7 Project partners and third parties involved

- SGN – lead gas network providing funding and support to the delivery team, including training, access to broader referral partners, and direct services for customers including but not limited to the Priority Services Register, Locking Cooker Valves and carbon monoxide alarms
- Repowering London – local community energy partner with more than a decade of experience engaging with underrepresented communities in Lambeth; will be responsible for delivering and coordinating the service, managing issue of fuel vouchers, CO alarms, and proactive boiler servicing, and conducting home visits for free retrofit measures assessments
- South London Together – a partnership between SGN, community organisations South East London Community Energy (SELCE), and Thinking Works, providing a personalised energy services and Heat

Doctor appointments; referral partner on this project, with Repowering London team making relevant customer referrals for targeted advice.

- Centre 70 – local advice centre providing specialist advice on housing, welfare benefits, debt, and legal; referral organisation on this project, with Repowering London team making relevant customer referrals for targeted advice.
- Gas Safe Charity – keep those most at risk, safe from gas poisoning, fires and explosions and strive to reduce gas-related injury, illness and death, and will provide relevant information on gas safety for distribution at customer support sessions.
- Thames Water – local water services provider, with WaterHelp for low-income customers; referral organisation on this project, with the Repowering London team making relevant customer referrals for WaterHelp.

Repowering London will work closely with other partners other local community organisations, voluntary organisations, and housing providers such as Tenant Management Organisations, leveraging Repowering London's strong local networks.

## 8 Potential for new learning

### Monitoring and evaluation

This partnership has been co-designed by Repowering London and SGN, building capacity by providing access to key services that address fuel poverty and broader safeguarding and wellbeing services to those in need. As we progress with the delivery, the following activities will be in place to monitor and evaluate project progress and impacts:

- The partners will work closely to ensure that we're monitoring outcomes against the success criteria by delivering monthly reporting against KPIs, including identification of good practice and case studies
- Measuring our impact through regular service feedback questionnaires. We will use a tailored five-point evaluation questionnaire to monitor the specific components that we want to improve for beneficiaries.
- Feedback from questionnaires enable us to measure how well we are helping by providing practical advice, are attendees reporting better access to information and support. We are also looking at aspects of general health and well-being such as such as feeling more connected to others and less anxious.
- The questionnaires have additional space for attendees to write more in-depth personalised reviews and this qualitative data is invaluable to us in helping assess and shape our services.
- Support given to VCSE organisations to do the same with beneficiaries and design user friendly ways to measure initial awareness and measure awareness following energy conversations.

### Learning

We are keen to learn from this project and for successes to be incorporated into ongoing projects that engage harder to reach and fuel poor communities in London. Through working across an extensive network of referral pathways the group will review the success of training, workshops and case studies to identify and share best practice. In addition to networking, the project offers learning opportunities across stakeholder organisations which result in an improved understanding of clients' needs. By working with South London Together we will look to have shared learnings from both projects.

We are looking to see if this project could be replicable in other geographic areas if delivered by organisations with good local connections. We are keen to share our experience with other new and existing energy advice services about learning from our experiences and are aiming to present experiences to date to a Community Energy London meeting in 2024 in addition to SGN's Safe and Warm partnership network.

We are keen to learn from this project and for successes to be incorporated into future delivery as well as shared with other sector participants. We intend to share an annual report across electricity, gas and water networks and with local authorities in addition to sharing project impacts and case studies during our VCMA annual showcase event.



## 9 Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations

Working with SIA Partners we've developed a number of social proxy values aligned to the work and outcomes we and our partners are delivering. Using these along with the DNO SROI assessment tool and methodology we have carried out an in-depth assessment of the financial and wellbeing outcomes associated with this project, and we forecast a positive net SROI of £2.08.

### Social Value Measurement

<b>Total cost*</b>	£204,395.79
<b>Total gross present value</b>	£629,302.35
<b>Net Present Value (NPV)</b>	£424,906.56
<b>SROI</b>	£2.08

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

## 10 VCMA Project start and end date

The project will run from April 2024 to March 2026 (24 Months)

## 11 Geographic area

Project activities will take place in the London Borough of Lambeth, with programme learnings and resources shared more widely across Repowering London's areas of work in Newham, Tower Hamlets & the City of London, North Kensington, and Hammersmith & Fulham.

## 12 Internal governance and project management evidence

Description of GDN(s) review of proposal and project sign off, with details on how the project will be managed

SGN has worked alongside Repowering London to co-design this partnership and ensure that its ambition contributes to the delivery of our Vulnerability Strategy, the guidance from our Vulnerable Customer Steering Group and adheres to the updated VCMA governance criteria.

The SROI has been assessed using the DNO Rulebook and methodology with additional GDN proxies developed with SIA Partners. As detailed above we have reviewed the current partnership scope which has been forecast at adding an additional £2.08 for each £1 invested, this will be monitored closely to ensure we adhere to the VCMA governance criteria.

SGN and Repowering London will meet monthly and quarterly to review outcomes, learn, share best practices, and address any delivery issues.

The PEA has been reviewed and approved by the business lead Kerry Potter and the Director of Customer Services Maureen McIntosh.