

Home & Well – Good Neighbours Network

Hampshire & IoW

Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance

April 2024



SGN

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1 Description

Project Title	Home & Well Good Neighbours Network
Funding GDN(s)	SGN
New/Updated (indicate as appropriate)	Updated
For Collaborative VCMA Projects:	N/A
Date of PEA submission:	April 2024
Project contact name:	Janet Duggan
Project contact number/email:	Janet.duggan@sgn.co.uk
Total cost (£k)	£418,955.76
Total VCMA funding required (£k)	£418,955.76

2 Problem statement

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 (NEA) **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.

In the same NEA YouGov polling it was found that 49% of households turned the heating off even though it was cold in the house, 43% of adults had gone to bed early to stay warm and 13% of households had used appliances like ovens to stay warm.

Cold homes and poor housing conditions have been linked with a range of health problems in children and young people, including respiratory health, growth and long-term health. In older people, cold temperatures increase the risk of heart attack, stroke and circulatory problems, respiratory disease, flu and hospital admission. They also lower strength and dexterity, leading to an increase in the likelihood of falls and accidental injuries. Home temperatures also have implications for mental health because cold is linked with increased risk of depression and anxiety.

During December 2022 over 9 million adults across England lived in damp cold homes, this contributed to worsening public health and pressures on the NHS. Cold homes have a negative impact on our NHS resources due to people taking longer to recover from illnesses, particularly those recently discharged from hospital.

Carbon Monoxide (CO) can pose a serious threat to human health and even fatality, with around 50 deaths caused by [CO poisoning each year in the UK and 4,000](#) people treated in hospital as a result of CO poisoning.

Many people in the UK who use carbon fuelled appliances are not aware of the dangers of CO and do not have a working audible CO alarm. Of 8,000 people surveyed by the Gas Distribution Networks in 2020 45% didn't know that CO doesn't have a smell, and only 42% had a working audible CO alarm. Lack of awareness about the dangers of and ways in which to prevent harm from CO are a major contributing factor to why we're still seeing CO related deaths and harm in a time when safety devices such as CO alarms are cheaper and more accessible than ever.

There is a direct correlation between fuel poverty and carbon monoxide poisoning. Lower income householders are often reliant on older boilers, older heaters or even gas stoves or cookers to heat their homes. National

Energy Action and Gas Safety Trust research found 35% of low income and vulnerable households surveyed exceeded the 10ppm threshold for carbon monoxide levels. People living in deprived areas are also less likely to own an audible CO alarm than homes in non-deprived areas, further increasing the risk of CO poisoning. Older people, pregnant women, and young children have also been found to be particularly vulnerable to CO poisoning, spending more time at home and with a need to stay warm, resulting in using the heating more regularly. Consumers in rented accommodation and particularly social tenants are less at risk due to requirements for annual gas safety checks, higher energy efficiency standards, and the legislation throughout England and Wales that now requires all rented homes to have a CO alarm installed in any room where there is a fixed combustion appliance (excluding gas cookers in England).

The Good Neighbours Network has over 4,000 volunteers who operate 120 local groups across Hampshire, they will work alongside the 600 Citizens Advice volunteers, to help deliver the energy advice and support.

Having access to vulnerable residents' homes has highlighted the detrimental impact that cold home can have on a person. The Good Neighbours Network has seen an increase in vulnerable situations as they support clients in their own environment such as people making difficult choices based on reduced household incomes whilst they provide medical transport, DIY and gardening support and help to ensure that their clients are safe and warm ensuring they are safe and warm.

3 Scope and objectives

Working in partnership SGN, Citizens Advice Hampshire, and The Good Neighbours Network will bring together a large network of local community partners to proactively support vulnerable residents of Hampshire with tailored support services to tackle fuel poverty and introduce energy safeguards that help those most vulnerable maintain a safe and warm home.

The partnership is designed to work alongside the Home & Well partnership in Hampshire, providing proactive and preventative support services, increasing the support available to vulnerable residents of Hampshire. The shared ambition is to reduce the potential impact on the NHS service and prevent hospitalisation for people who are at high risk because of living in a cold and unhealthy home.

Citizens Advice and the Good Neighbours Network help to reach vulnerable residents of Hampshire and offer a wide range of support. The project will help to enhance capacity on the ground by increasing the number of volunteers who can access clients in their home. By accessing clients in their homes and a community setting more advice and awareness can be raised around energy saving solutions, carbon monoxide and the priority services register. Citizens Advice will give the full wrap around support to assist clients in any other underlying issues.

The ambition of the partnership is to support the most vulnerable residents of Hampshire to stay safe and well in their own homes. The project will also increase the health and wellbeing of the clients by addressing the financial costs of essential services including utilities, rent, food, and social isolation, by linking people up to appropriate wellbeing services.

We plan to deliver tailored energy safeguarding support to vulnerable residents of Hampshire through a dedicated team of skilled energy and engagement advisers who will work alongside Good Neighbours Volunteers to:

- Create welcoming spaces for vulnerable residents of Hampshire where they can comfortably access tailored energy safeguarding support within the community, that addresses the underlying causes of fuel poverty, and access to key utility services designed for customers in vulnerable circumstances;
- Provide access to tailored information packs that help to address fuel poverty / energy safeguards that can be shared directly with vulnerable residents of Hampshire;
- Create broader social impact as we alleviate the pressures on the NHS, avoiding the need to use hospital services and where needed transitioning to in-home services;
- Ensure that the provision of energy related support services includes energy efficiency advice, energy efficiency home audits, energy bill advocacy, carbon monoxide safety conversations, locking cooker valve referral, and access to the Priority Services Register;

- Refer anyone who needs further support to their local Citizens Advice

The partnership project will be available across Hampshire in all 120 local groups run by the Good Neighbours Network volunteers. The service will be offered by specially trained volunteers (with one volunteer per local group) who can deliver CO awareness and basic energy saving tips which can be offered face-to-face or via e-learning with support from the NEA and other partners. The groups provide both practical help with tasks and emotional help through befriending schemes and an expanding range of social activities, from film club to bike club. Each group is unique and operates autonomously. Many offer much needed transport to medical appointments or a hand with the shopping. There are also two Dementia cafes in the Network. All the groups aim to reach out to isolated people and deliver what is needed in their community.

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4 Why the project is being funded through the VCMA

This project will provide support to vulnerable residents of Hampshire in crisis, providing access to key services including the PSR, interventions that address fuel and water poverty and broader safeguarding / wellbeing services, whilst delivering a positive Social Return on Investment. The project will provide holistic utility efficiency advice and carbon monoxide safety interventions, empowering each householder to use energy safely, efficiently and affordably. The project 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 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 2 (3 and 4).

5 Evidence of stakeholder/customer support

5.1 Home & Well – Stakeholder feedback

Tim Cooling, Head of Strategy, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Partnership of Clinical Commissioning Groups said, *“The Home & Well service continues to provide an important and timely intervention to keep people safe and well at home following a stay in hospital. With concerns about the overall cost of living the service is well placed to offer the right help at the right time, so It’s been great to see the scheme expanded across more hospital sites allowing more residents to benefit from the support. One of the core ambitions for us as a new Integrated Care System, and as partners working together, is to tackle health inequalities and the Home & Well service supports this ambition by equipping vulnerable people with the necessary support to live safely and independently.*

The ICB has some key objectives when it comes to enabling people to return home safely with appropriate interventions which include reducing length of stay in hospital and increasing the number of people who are discharged to their own homes. Over 20% of people in hospital are deemed fit to go home but for a variety of reasons don't have the right support at home. The Home & Well service is helping us to meet these objectives by providing a valuable wrap around offer supporting individuals with debt advice, benefits and issues with housing and utilities. Importantly, by ensuring that vulnerable people are signed up to the Priority Services Register means that those who need access to power and water as part of their health recovery needs are given additional support. The planned expansion of the service across Hampshire is welcome news and means that Home & Well will be able to support increasing numbers of vulnerable people who might otherwise have been at risk of having additional complications with their recovery. With increasing demand on hospital beds, we need to support community solutions that enable people to stay well and avoid preventable hospital admissions."

5.2 SGN GD2 Business Plan – Stakeholder feedback

Throughout GD2 our dedicated Vulnerable Steering Group has helped us shape our vulnerability strategy and our priorities to ensure that we meet our Business Plan commitments to support vulnerable customers, those most in need of support to maintain a safe and warm home. It is with guidance and support from our dedicated Vulnerable Steering Group that SGN have a clear approach to delivering support to vulnerable customers, ensuring that we're using relevant data to prioritise targeting priority customer groups and working in geographic areas most likely to be living in cold and unhealthy homes.

SGNs stakeholder endorsed strategy prioritised key Priority Customer Groups that require tailored support services to those who are served by local organisations with a focus on health and wellbeing services for the most vulnerable in our community.

During our Stakeholder engagement sessions over 2021-2023, stakeholders valued creating opportunities for local organisations to build skills and access VCMA funding to make a positive impact by supporting customer in need use energy safely, efficiently and affordably.

5.3 Good Neighbours Network Impact

The Hampshire Good Neighbours Network is a unique collection of 120 autonomous local volunteer-led and run groups which in 2019 provided 188,759 social, transport and practical good neighbourly activities. It is a unique and authentic example of what so many policy makers, service providers and communities say is urgently required – more proactive and caring communities.

Overall, the groups and volunteers are carrying out more activities with a 19% increase since 2015. The shift to a more intensive model of growth can also be seen in the welcome move to more socially based activities, with a further 74% increase since 2015. The other key results found in this report are:

- Since the 2015 impact report there has been a further 74% increase in social and group-based activities. Social activities are now the single biggest type of activity (48%) carried out by groups and these have been shown to have a greater positive effect on general well-being, functioning and on the prevention of conditions such as dementia and depression
- The reduction in some local community and preventative services and the greater centralisation of treatment and care services, particularly in the NHS continues to lead to strong demand for patient transport (a 14% increase in 2019). It has been estimated that the transport provided results in an estimated saving of £2,642,278 from potentially missed outpatient appointments alone. Replacing the current volunteer transport activities with an equivalent staffed service would cost an estimated £3,230,997 per annum. With the ongoing relocation of services, this model of very flexible local transport may become even more important
- The continued investment in Good Neighbours from Hampshire County Council and the National Health Service has seen a 70% increase in activity since 2010. For each £1.00 that Hampshire County Council and the NHS invest in the Good Neighbours Network they are receiving a £17.78 net return with an increase in return since 2010 of 80%

There are also significant additional benefits in improved access to and better usage of services, increased mobility, maintenance of independent living, reduced social isolation and more widely an increased level of trust, safety, social participation and well-being.

6 Outcomes, associated actions and success criteria

6.1 Outcomes

Home & Well Good Neighbours Network will bring together a network across the carer community to help identify fuel poverty and share information and resources that help keep those most vulnerable customers safe and warm in their own homes.

Vulnerable Hampshire Residents will receive help with:

- Ways to increase energy efficiency
- Access to the Priority Services Register (PSR)
- Information on CO safety and access to free CO alarms
- Information and access to Locking Cooker Valves for those living with dementia(s) or other cognitive impairment(s)
- Information and onward signposting to other support organisations and relevant grant schemes

6.2 Success Criteria

To support at least 4,000 clients over two years addressing the issues of carbon monoxide and cold homes. We aim to support those in need with access to practical help that improves their health and wellbeing and increases their confidence to manage their household utility costs.

Over the two years our ambition is to;

- Train 90 volunteers on how to support people to sign up to the PSR
- Train 90 volunteers on carbon monoxide awareness and how to assess carbon monoxide risk factors
- Train 90 volunteers on how to identify fuel poverty, link residents with information or onward referral to Home & Well adviser via a direct referral
- Offer clients support to assess eligibility and sign-up to the PSR with an expectation of 60% registration
- Offer energy advice including information about who to call in an emergency, smart meters, Winter Fuel Payments, Warm Homes Discount, information on tariffs and energy / water efficiency
- Have 4,000 customers provided with in person energy efficiency advice
- Have 1,000 customers provided with a CO Awareness session and the offer of a CO alarm where required with an expectation of 25% uptake (250)
- Patients will be offered support to access affordable warmth schemes where appropriate with an onward referral to assess for energy efficiency scheme eligibility including the FPNES
- Patients assessed for income related benefits, and supported where eligible for debt support in increase household financial resilience

To monitor our impact in line with the above, we will:

- Monitor client outcomes against services provided, client demographics, vulnerabilities and needs
- Build in targeted, concise questions to our post service client survey
- Work closely with our partners to ensure that we all understand the issues faced by clients enabling us to continue to develop our services by need

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 Locking Cooker Valves, CO alarms and access to the Fuel Poor Network Extension Scheme.
- Citizens Advice Home & Well – manage the skills required, co-ordinate the Citizens Advice integration and guidance of the Good Neighbours Network on energy and household issues that could impact a resident’s health and wellbeing. The team will provide the training and volunteer support as detailed in the outcomes and success criteria.
- Good Neighbours Network - a collection of over 120 local groups run by local people for local people all offering a helping hand to others in their community, will be identifying and supporting vulnerable households who require energy support services, and delivering outcomes designed for customers.
- Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board (ICB) – lead NHS representative and co-founder of the partnership, identifying and referring patients who would benefit from the support services team.

8 Potential for new learning

Monitoring and evaluation

The following activities will be in place to monitor and evaluate project progress and impacts;

- Quantitative and qualitative service user outcomes and demographics/vulnerabilities recorded/monitored
- Service user before-and-after-support surveys and follow-up calls
- In-bound and out-bound referrals from/to partners and other services recorded/monitored
- Feedback, indicators, outputs, and outcomes reported on quarterly

Learning

We are keen to learn from this project and for successes to be incorporated into future delivery as well as promoted to others.

9 Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations, including NPV

We 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 of the predicted outcomes we forecast a positive net social return of £1.65.

Social Value Measurement

Total cost*	£411,811.62
Total gross present value	£1,091,124.50
Net Present Value (NPV)	£679,312.88
SROI	£1.65

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

10 VCMA Project start and end date

The project will run from 1st May 2024 – 31st March 2026

11 Geographic area

Hampshire

12 Internal governance and project management evidence

SGN has worked alongside Citizens Advice Hampshire and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board (ICB) 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 externally assessed by SIA Partners using the DNO / GDN common rulebook. As detailed above SIA partners have reviewed the current partnership scope which has been forecast at adding an additional £1.65 for each £1 invested, this will be monitored closely to ensure we adhere to the VCMA governance criteria and deliver a positive SROI.

To support the partnership to deliver the success criteria outcomes as detailed, the partners will work closely to support the Good Neighbours Network to ensure impactful delivery. Citizens Advice Hampshire and SGN already meet monthly to review partner challenges, and the team provide 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.