Holistic energy advisory service – YES

Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance 31 March 2023

Updates;

- May 24
- June 24
- August 24





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1 Description

Funding GDN(s)	SGN
For Collaborative VCMA Projects:	N/A
New/Updated	Update May 2024 Update June 2024 Update August 2024
Date of PEA submission:	31 March 2023 Update August 2024
Project contact name:	Kerry Potter
Project contact number/email:	Kerry.potter@sgn.co.uk
Total cost (£k)	£151,647 Update May 2024 £172,677.70 Update June 2024 £204,079.70 Update August 2024 £744,939.70
Total VCMA funding required (£k)	£151,647 Update May 2024 £172,677.70 – additional £21,030.70 for CO alarms and fuel vouchers Update June 2024 £204,079.70 2-month extension = £31,402 Update August 2024 £744,939.70 total cost 20-month extension = £540,860

2 Problem statement

In October 2021, it was estimated that four million UK households were living in fuel poverty (National Energy Action). It was recognised that nearly half of low-income households were 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. Since then, the UK's energy prices have more than doubled rapidly and it is currently estimated that there are over 6.7 million households living in fuel poverty in the UK.

From 1 October 2022, the government implemented an energy price guarantee, which limits the amount households can be charged per unit of gas or electricity. The energy price guarantee has been amended many times throughout its introduction in October 2022, however it has recently been announced in the 2022 Autumn Statement that the energy price guarantee will last until March 2024. It is worth noting, the energy price guarantee stays as it is until the end of March 2023, after which it will rise by about 20% (so an 'average' household will pay £3k instead of £2.5k).

It is predicted that such price rise will increase the number of households into fuel poverty to almost 11 million, that is one in three households, many of which will be in extreme fuel poverty (NEA, Fuel Poverty Coalition, Cornwall Insight).

The current cost of living crisis, including high energy costs, is placing significant financial pressure on those on middle to low incomes and forcing around one in three UK households into fuel poverty. This includes many people in the previously 'just about managing' demographic who may be facing financial hardship for the first



time; a significant number of whom are new to seeking support as they have not accessed it in the past and are unsure of where to turn and who to trust. Energy costs are exacerbating other household costs, such as food, fuel and housing, and as recent Government efforts to limit bill increases show, are at the heart of the cost-of-living crisis.

As part of SGN's well-established customer service pathways, customers are already showing 'warning signs' of financial struggles. As a trusted utility company, we are uniquely placed, through our customer touchpoints, to take meaningful action to support these customers. While a range of support services are available, they are fragmented, differ by local authority region, and require significant effort from a demographic of customers who may lack the confidence, trust, and knowledge to do so, and thus may remain in deprived and vulnerable situations, disengaged from the support which could have a meaningful, positive impact.

Update August 2024

Since March 2023, YES has run a targeted holistic advice service in SGN's catchment, focussed on helping householders reduce energy bills, maximise income and adopt low carbon lifestyles. The project has mainly supported customers across both networks offering holistic telephone-based advice covering energy efficiency, tariff switching, carbon monoxide safety, behaviour change tips and benefit entitlement checks. To date 2,375 households have been supported with 6,041 fuel poverty interventions, resulting in combined savings of over £888,966. We have continued our support for fuel poor households, providing an energy related telephony service, until March 26 targeting those most vulnerable across both networks.

3 Scope and objectives

Working in partnership SGN and YES Energy Solutions will look to address the complexity and deliver a holistic energy advisory service for customers within its region. The scope of the service would pull together the disparate support services currently available, in order to deliver a comprehensive set of interventions that are tailored to the individual circumstances and energy needs of each customer via a single provider. This approach will reduce the risk of hand-offs and signposting to other agencies which can cause confusion and require significant effort from the customer to contact a number of companies.

The objective of this initiative is to provide holistic support to customers who are looking for suitable ways to address the underlying causes of fuel poverty though a centralised and independent energy advisory service tailored to the customer's needs and circumstances.

The scope of the initiative covers;

- 1. A holistic energy support service, that provides a range of energy related interventions including but not limited to;
 - a. energy saving advice, which includes help to understand ways in which you can use energy more efficiently, assess EPC and by guided on appropriate small measure recommendations
 - b. assessment of eligibility for energy schemes, funding and grants that improve the energy efficiency and or reduce the cost to heat the property including FPNES, WHD and Winter / Cold Weather payments
 - c. review of potential income maximisation opportunities including benefit entitlement checks, crisis fuel vouchers, water social tariff and debt support
 - d. providing information on gas safety, support to sign up to the Priority Services Register and who to contact in an emergency (eg. 0800 111 999 and 105) as well as information on the benefits of smart meters
 - e. supporting eligible customers to access the SGN broader network of partners via a warm referral on to other specialists for help where needed including Scope, Mental Health and Money Advice Service, Age UK / Age Scotland with the outcomes of improving the quality of people's lives, their mental, physical, and financial wellbeing.

Update May 2024

f. provision of fuel vouchers for customers most in need

<u>Update August 24</u> – expansion for 20 months supporting an additional 4,000 people with services above and including

g. provide advice and support relating to low carbon technologies and the transition to net zero

The identification of customers for this scheme will broadly fall into two categories:

1) Utilising every available SGN customer-touchpoint

SGN will ensure processes are in place to identify customers in vulnerable situations who may benefit from this support as part of its day-to-day customer service channels. For example, this will include customers contacting SGN to report a gas outage or new connection, as well as those notified as part of planned work, repairs, and major mains replacement programmes. This will utilise the customer's initial engagement to offer these additional services.

2) Targeted campaigns and outreach to identify hard-to-reach vulnerable customers

Utilising available social indicator data, we will target areas of high likely deprivation (for example where there is a concurrence of key indicators, such as: fuel poverty; poor housing stock/EPC rating; >age 65; health conditions and high local deprivation markers) for specific recruitment campaigns. These campaigns will include advice associated with SGN's core services (for example, resilience to outages, winter readiness information and Priority Services support), alongside the provision of fuel poverty support via holistic, targeted energy advice. We would also target areas where data reveals high concentrations of customers eligible for the Priority Services Register, but low existing take-up. Finally, we will utilise community drop-in sessions hosted by SGN to explain significant network investment/upgrade schemes to offer these additional energy advice services to the customers in each region.

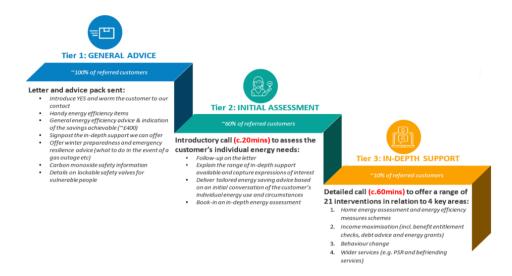
Update August 24 – Three tier service delivery model to reach around 320,000 households providing holistic support for an additional 4,000 people.

As per our current project, a Home Energy Support pack, containing useful tips and energy saving devices, will be sent to every customer that has responded to our marketing. We will then contact each household to offer initial advice via telephone. If we are unable to make contact, we will send out a reengagement letter promoting our energy advice line.

Our initial triage call will cover the fundamentals of the support service, delivering general advice spanning around 12 steps the householder could take to improve the energy efficiency of their home and reduce their energy costs.

Our team will then offer each customer the opportunity to receive further in-depth support via a comprehensive, tailored household assessment and bespoke energy saving report, detailing our recommendations. A full Low Carbon Technology (LCT) readiness assessment will also be completed with a proportion of customers. Where relevant, we will distribute a carbon monoxide alarm and add to the Priority Services Register.

While the objective is to encourage as many customers as possible to undertake the most in-depth level of support and therefore receive highly personalised advice, as a minimum we will ensure a basic level of advice is received by every customer entering the service.



As part of the Tier 2 (T2) service described above, we will also provide customers with targeted support to ensure 'no one is left behind in the transition to a smart energy future.' As per our current project, we are likely to engage with customers where main gas is not a viable or cost-effective option. In these cases we will explore alternative technologies and renewable heating options.

We will also highlight other considerations that support the transition to a Net Zero lifestyle. Each T2 call will be split into two parts (T2.1 and T2.2). All customers undertaking in-depth advice will receive the T2.1 service, covering appropriate energy saving interventions, measures, funding streams and onward support (i.e. income maximisation). Whereas a proportion of these customers (we estimate around 75%) will progress for tailored T2.2 support covering LCTs and removing barriers for integration. T2.2 advice will be offered following the Tier 1 initial assessment and completed as part of the in-depth consultation.

There is clear separation between the two Tier 2 services as detailed below. This segregation aids reporting and helps customers focus on different aspects of their energy saving journey.

Tier 2 – In-depth support			
T2.1	T2.2		
Assessment of household, identifying energy performance and existing measures Quick wins – advice on low-cost energy saving measures (i.e. draft proofing, LEDs, etc) Advice on fabric and heating measures to enhance energy efficiency and reduce bills Access to relevant funding streams (e.g. ECO, HUG, Council grants, etc) Review of energy bills and tariffs In-depth behaviour change plan Income maximisation advice Health and wellbeing support	Overview of Net Zero – what is it and what does it mean for householders What are LCTs and which are worth considering – assessment of household and circumstances LCT benefits over more traditional systems – i.e. savings, environmental impact, etc Bespoke assessment of barriers to adopt LCTs Opportunities for adoption (i.e. available funding, local schemes, infrastructure, etc) Short to medium term plan for adopting and utilising LCTs		

Our T2.2 service will explain the different LCTs available and deliver advice to tackle some of the long-term barriers to customers installing one in the future, including:

Barrier	YES' support offering		
Lack of knowledge about LCTs and	✓ Surveys with customers to gain a more in-depth understanding of the ongoing barriers to uptake		
their benefits	✓ Advice on benefits and considerations of different technologies available		
Lack of available	✓ Energy saving advice to lower bills		
capital/funds	✓ Checks for available funding support in each area		
	 ✓ Hand holding through funding applications – ECO and other available LCT funding 		
	✓ Emergency resilience advice (PSR checks)		

Energy		Smart meter uptake advice
management capabilities (incl.	✓	Provide links to community energy schemes where available
ability to use energy more flexibly)		Explain the connections process and indicative costs
Understanding the LCT suitability at	✓	Model the potential benefits/impacts for the specific property profile (opportunities/personalised plans)
each specific property	✓	Determination of needs based on available budget, funding streams and housing profile
	✓	Review the details in an existing EPC assessments
Knowledge of	✓	Retrofit energy efficiency assessment
essential preparatory works/steps	✓	Tailored smart energy readiness report
Network readiness	✓	Rating of current mains fuse; currently available network capacity; single/three phase supply assessment

Following each call our team will provide each customer with a written summary setting out which LCTs could be considered, what changes in the property would need to be explored, and details of any available funding to support installation costs.

4 Why the project is being funded through the VCMA

The service will provide support to consumers in vulnerable situations to tackle fuel poverty issues and to address CO safety issues resulting in positive Social Return on Investment. The project will provide holistic energy efficiency advice, awareness of the dangers of CO tailored to the needs of each householder to support energy safeguarding and reduce the risk of harm caused by CO and identify clients who should register for the Priority Service Register. The project will work collaboratively with expert agencies to maximise positive impacts and deliver defined outcomes for individuals.

The project delivers against SGNs Vulnerability Strategy, by providing targeted support to households most at risk of living in fuel poverty based upon their personal circumstances and their geographical location. The partnership service aligns to our strategic ambition to support customers in energy crisis, helping those in fuel poverty to access financial crisis support, and other services including the Priority Services Register, awareness of the dangers of Carbon Monoxide and energy efficiency advice, empowering vulnerable households to use energy safely, efficiently, and affordably.

This partnership aligns to the SGN commitment to deliver support services 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 and 4.

5 Evidence of stakeholder/customer support

5.1 YES Energy Solutions (YES)

YES is a multi-award-winning Community Interest Company delivering services to people in vulnerable situations to:

- alleviate fuel poverty,
- deliver energy efficiency measures and advice services,
- and reduce CO2 emissions.

It has over 22 years of experience in delivering effective energy saving initiatives on behalf of Local Authorities, Housing Associations and Energy Companies - reducing customer fuel bills and supporting the most vulnerable householders through a range of sustainable actions. In 2022, it delivered support measures to more than 3,000 households, directly leading to more than £46 million in lifetime fuel bill savings. Building on this platform over the last twelve months the provision of a holistic, wrap around energy advice service has delivered a range of support to directly benefit customers in vulnerable circumstances. This has helped to lower their energy costs, deliver exceptional customer satisfaction, and achieve significant social return on investment. Support centres on the delivery of advice in relation to a minimum of 17 interventions, within four categories, as follows:

A. Energy efficiency measures

- 1. EPC checker and measure recommendations
- 2. Funding and grants
- 3. Available projects / delivery schemes in the area

B. Income maximisation

- 4. Warm homes discount
- 5. Benefit entitlement checks
- 6. Access to cold weather payments
- 7. Winter fuel payments
- 8. Fuel vouchers
- 9. Hardship funds

C. Saving energy

- 10. Smart meters
- 11. Support when struggling with energy bills
- 12. Understanding your energy bill
- 13. Tariff switching
- 14. Saving water

D. Further support

- 15. Befriending services
- 16. Priority Services Register
- 17. Gas safety information (including carbon monoxide awareness)



The current performance Yes Energy Solutions service, based on the steps covered on average each customer could make an average of saving of £495 per year. Where customers elect to receive an in-depth support service, including a live household energy assessment, the average savings achieved rise to more than £1,500 per supported customer (based on pilot schemes we have delivered to date). The nature of this service is to deliver support services that are tailored to the individual needs of the customers supported – identifying the highest impact options to improve their energy efficiency and materially reduce customers' risk of fuel poverty.

5.2 SGNs Vulnerable Customer Steering Group

Our Vulnerable Steering Group (VSG) has helped shape our vulnerability strategy and priorities for GD2 and how best to utilise the VCMA to help those most a 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 living with a health condition made worse by living in a cold and damp home. This partnership is built on data and covers geographic areas where there is compelling data that identifies vulnerable customer needs, both due to fuel poverty and health indictors.

As we have 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 other utilities, health services and charities to deliver support services that tackle the fuel poverty gap and the underlying causes of fuel poverty.

6 Outcomes, associated actions, and success criteria

6.1 Outcomes

The YES Energy Solutions team will work to directly support 2,375 people who would benefit from or are seeking independent advice and impactful solutions to using energy safely, efficiently, and affordably.

The partnership will be a published service with an integrated marketing campaign designed to identify those customers most likely to benefit from tailored energy advice services, with tangible outcomes that reduce energy consumption and costs.

The primary outcomes will be the direct financial savings that customers can be expected to make as a result of the advice received. In addition, we will robustly report on additional health and wellbeing impacts, to enable an indication of the likely social value achieved by these outcomes. Finally, the energy saved as a result of the energy efficiency advice and measures will enable a positive carbon impact to be reported.

The project aims to provide the following direct outcomes to service users;

- Assess the household for eligibility to energy efficiency schemes including the FPNES
- For eligible people to be supported by their utilities Priority Services Register, providing them with the security and support they will need during an outage and tailored support with costs
- For people who are seeking energy advisory services, safe ways to stay safe and warm, information on what support is available and help to manage and pay their own utility bills going forward
- Provide households with access to Carbon Monoxide (CO) safety advice and CO alarms
- For those identified as being in energy crisis provide support to deal with the immediate needs including access to fuel vouchers and hardship funds.
- For those on a low income/fuel poverty provide assess households for income maximisation and benefit entitlement checks helping to lift them out of fuel poverty.

6.2 Success Criteria

Working together, YES Energy Solutions and SGN will provide access to independent and trusted information on ways to increase your home energy costs and save money, as well as access support services / schemes designed for vulnerable households. It is essential that these services are of consistently high quality, with customers receiving a bespoke service that meets their specific requirements. As such, we anticipate a ramp up in the volumes of customers supported (and associated benefits and savings achieved) throughout the first 12 months of delivery to refine the support offering, referral pathways and user journeys to ensure that processes are efficient and enduring, and most importantly, these schemes deliver excellent customer satisfaction. We therefore predict the following initial volumes:

Q1 (April-June 2023)	Q2 (July-Septem 2023)	oer Q3 (October-December 2023)	Q4 (January-March 2024)
275	525	750	825

We therefore aim to deliver the following customer outcomes, which has formed the basis of our Social Return on Investment modelling.

- 2,375 customers provided with support to use energy safely, efficiently, and affordably via information packs and up to three attempted calls to discuss this general advice.
- 1,425 customers provided with 'telephone triage appointments' that carry out an initial assessment of
 the customer's individual energy needs and specific characteristics of their property to provide tailored
 advice information
- 1,425 energy efficiency scheme assessments including eligibility for FPNES
- 238 customers provided with 'in depth support' that provides tailored assistance in relation to: a specific
 home energy assessment and energy efficiency measures schemes, income maximisation support (incl.
 benefit entitlement checks, debt advice and energy grants) and access to grants and schemes the
 households may be eligible for based upon the customers circumstances
- 70 customers provided crisis funding including fuel vouchers and access to hardship funds
- 712 customers supported to join the PSR
- 2,375 customers provided with CO awareness advice and where required free CO alarm
- 2,375 customers provided with energy saving packs

Update May 2024

- 200 customers identified as most in need provided with £50 crisis funding fuel vouchers
- 1,000 customers provided with a free CO alarm

Update June 2024

- 400 customers provided with support to use energy safely, efficiently, and affordably via information packs and up to three attempted calls to discuss this general advice.
- Of which 80 customers will be provided with 'in depth support' that provides tailored assistance in relation to: a specific home energy assessment and energy efficiency measures schemes, income maximisation support (incl. benefit entitlement checks, debt advice and energy grants) and access to grants and schemes the households may be eligible for based upon the customers circumstances
- 400 PSR conversations with 25% registration 100 households
- 100 CO conversations

Update August 2024 for 20-month extension

Our initiative aims to reach approx. 320,000 households across various marketing initiatives providing information on saving energy and raising awareness of carbon monoxide and the Priority Services Register, of which we expect 5,500 households to contact the YES team for further support.

From the 5,500 people engaged YES will support 4,000 customers with access to

energy advice packs

- carbon monoxide (CO) awareness
- Priority Service Register (PSR) information

From the 4,000 customers

- 3,000 will receive a free CO alarm
- 1,845 will be provided with energy crisis funding
- 1,000 will be signed up to PSR
- 1,000 will be provided with 'in depth support' that provides tailored assistance in relation to:
 - o a specific home energy assessment
 - o energy efficiency measure schemes
 - o income maximisation support (incl. benefit entitlement checks, debt advice and energy grants)
 - o access to grants and schemes the households may be eligible for based upon the customers circumstances
 - o provided with advice and support relating to low carbon technologies and the transition to net zero (new)

To understand the impact of our programme we will monitor outcomes of those using the services provided by capturing data on who is using the service including demographics, vulnerabilities, and needs. We will work closely with our partners to ensure that we all understand the issues faced to continue to develop our services by need. The Yes Energy Solutions team will survey users of the service and provide case studies of the impact of the programme on frontline support and impact of individuals supported by the initiative (partner and individual).

7 Project partners and third parties involved

SGN

YES Energy Solutions and their partners

Established in 2022, YES runs a holistic advice centre that helps vulnerable householders reduce their carbon footprint and maximise their income. Funded through various gas and electricity networks, our service is now nationwide, supporting around 1,500 customers a month. Our team of Level 3 Energy Awareness accredited advisors offer householders effective behaviour change tips whist validating them for funded schemes and other vulnerability support services. This includes carbon monoxide advice, benefit entitlement checks and low carbon technology readiness assessments. At a high level, our holistic advice service seeks to:

- Provide services that tackle the root causes of fuel poverty and demonstrate a significant social value to those customers supported
- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of need, enabling us to deliver high impact, tailored support
 services including: Providing customers with up to date and relevant energy saving advice. –
 Establishing whether households qualify for national or regional funding streams to support the cost of
 energy efficiency upgrades in their property and facilitate access to this funding. Referring customers
 for additional financial support i.e. income maximisation, debt advice, etc
- Assess each households' readiness for the Net Zero transition, ensuring no one is left behind in a low carbon future
- Deliver high quality and granular reporting of outcomes to clients so that customer benefits are articulated and quantified

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 customer outcomes including insights into the needs of those who are using the service (demographics / location / interventions)
- Customer before-and-after-support surveys and case studies to understand the impact of the services and support provided

Learning

The outcomes of the project will be shared as a minimum across our partnership network and with other energy network / energy supplier organisations and the Utilities Customer Safeguarding working groups.

9 Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations

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 £3.60.

Social Value Measurement

5-year figures				
	Total cost	£151,647.00		
	Total gross present value	£696,881.10		
Economic	NPV	£545,234.10		
	SROI	£3.60		
	Gross present value per person	£293.42		

Update May 2024

We have updated the SROI forecast carried out by SIA Partners to incorporate the additional costs and social value for the additional outcomes added in this update; CO alarms and fuel vouchers. Following these updates, we now forecast a positive net social return on investment (SROI) of £3.41.

5-year figures				
	Total cost	£172,777.70		
	Total gross present value	£761,183.68		
Economic	NPV	£588,405.98		
	SROI	£3.41		
	Gross present value per person	£320.50		

Update June 2024

To facilitate the 2-month extension of this project we have updated the SROI forecast carried out by SIA Partners to incorporate the additional costs and social value for the additional outcomes added in this extension. Following these updates, we now forecast a n overall positive net social return on investment (SROI) of £3.09.

5-year figure	S	
Economic	Total cost	£204,179.70

Total gross present value	£835,267.93
NPV	£631,088.23
SROI	£3.09
Gross present value per person	£301.00

Update August 2024

To facilitate the 20-month extension of this project to the end of GD2 we have updated the SROI forecast carried out by SIA Partners to incorporate the additional costs and social value for the additional outcomes added in this extension. Following these updates, across the project in its entirety we now forecast an overall positive net social return on investment (SROI) of £1.95.

5-year figures			
	Total cost*	£733,280.06	
	Total gross present value	£2,164,169.96	
Economic	NPV	£1,430,889.90	
	SROI	£1.95	
	Gross present value per person	£319.43	

^{*}Accounting for inflationary factors over the duration of the project

10 VCMA Project start and end date

The project will run from 31st of March 2023 until 30 April 2024.

Update May 2024

Project extended to run until 31 May 2024

Update June 2024

Project extended for two months to run until 31 July 2024.

Update August 2024

Project extended for 20 months to run until 31 March 2026.

11 Geographic area

SGN geographic areas

12 Internal governance and project management evidence

Update June 2024

SGN worked alongside YES Energy Solutions 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 was externally assessed by SIA Partners using the DNO rulebook with GDN proxies and updated to incorporate the additional costs and social value generated by the outcomes added in this update. As detailed above this partnership has been forecast at adding an additional £3.09 for each £1 invested, this will be monitored closely to ensure we adhere to the VCMA governance criteria and over deliver.



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

Update August 2024

SGN worked alongside YES Energy Solutions 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 was externally assessed by SIA Partners using the DNO rulebook with GDN proxies and updated to incorporate the additional costs and social value generated by the outcomes added in this update. As detailed above this partnership has been forecast at adding an additional £1.95 for each £1 invested, this will be monitored closely to ensure we adhere to the VCMA governance criteria and over deliver.

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