

My Network Energy Advice

With Worthing Mencap, East Kent Mencap,
Croydon Mencap and Reading Mencap

Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance

March 2024

Updated

July 2024

October 2024

January 2025

SGN



SGN

Your gas. Our network.

Contents

1 Description.....	3
2 Problem statement	3
3 Scope and objectives	6
4 Why the project is being funded through the VCMA	8
5 Evidence of stakeholder/customer support	8
5.1 Worthing Mencap	8
5.2 Case Study and Feedback	9
5.3 SGNs Vulnerable Steering Group	11
6 Outcomes, associated actions and success criteria.....	11
6.1 Outcomes	11
6.2 Success Criteria.....	14
7 Project partners and third parties involved	16
8 Potential for new learning	17
9 Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations, including NPV	19
10 VCMA Project start and end date	20
11 Geographic area	20
12 Internal governance and project management evidence	20

1 Description

Project title	Worthing Mencap - My Network Energy Advice Updated July 2024 East Kent Mencap - My Network Energy Advice Updated October 2024 Croydon Mencap - My Network Energy Advice Updated January 2025 Reading Mencap - My Network Energy Advice
Funding GDN(s)	SGN
New/Updated (indicate as appropriate)	Updated July 2024 Updated October 2024 Updated January 2025
Date of PEA submission:	March 2024 Updated July 2024 Updated October 2024 Updated January 2025
Project contact name: (SGN)	Janet Duggan
Project contact email: (SGN)	janet.duggan@sgn.co.uk
Total cost (£k)	£152,081 Updated July 2024 Update cost = £117,851 Updated October 2024 Update cost = £419,881 Updated January 2025 Update cost = £33,233.96 Total = £723,046.96
Total VCMA funding required (£k)	£152,081 Updated July 2024 Update cost = £117,851 Updated October 2024 Update cost = £419,881 Updated January 2025 Update cost = £33,233.96 Revised Total = £723,046.96

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 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.

Scope's 'Out in the cold' [report](#) published in 2018 showed that over a third of disabled adults say that their impairment or condition has a significant effect on their energy costs. There more than 900,000 households with a disabled person in England are living in fuel poverty, with 55% of disabled adults worried about paying their energy bills, with disabled families paying significantly more on their utilities than non-disabled families.

Three in five (57%), say that their energy bills have increased significantly and that they are concerned about being able to afford their energy in winter. It was also determined in this research that disabled people are largely unaware of the support available to them to safeguard their needs, including key services like the Priority Services Register (PSR), and that disabled people value targeted and tailored support designed for their needs.

In 2023, Scope in their [cost of living](#) crisis revisited this research and found that this situation had worsened for disabled people who now, on average, find that life costs an extra £1,222 a month if you're disabled. With the extra costs of heating, equipment and therapies, disabled people are more likely to face financial vulnerability, increased energy costs and fuel poverty.

There are 26,185 households in fuel poverty in West Sussex Fuel Poverty as cited in [West Sussex Framework for Action 2021- 2026](#). There are an estimated 10,600 adults aged 16+ with a learning disability or autism living in West Sussex (West Sussex County Council, 2024). The data above highlights that there is a higher likelihood that households with disabled people in West Sussex will be at risk of or living in fuel poverty.

Only [5.1% of adults with a learning disability](#) are in paid employment in England, against a figure of 75.7% of the general population. In West Sussex, these stats are [considerably lower at 2.1%](#), thus meaning the vast majority of people with a learning disability rely on benefits as their main source of income. This limited income combined with rising energy costs put people with a learning disability at further risk of living in fuel poverty.

Due to caring priorities at home, parents and carers are often less able to work to full-time hours in a week, significantly reducing their income potential. Energy related information, guidance and support is often missed by parents or carers in households with people with a disability, meaning they are left behind when in fuel poverty.

Worthing Mencap forms part of a consortium of charities delivering information, advice and support across West Sussex to people with a disability. The countywide network of services, called My Network, has seen an increase in demand of energy related support needs since the cost-of-living crisis began. Many people are concerned about their rising costs of energy and their static benefit income, this presents an increasing risk of entering into financial debt and poor mental and physical health. This results in a high demand for other services, causing a strain on statutory resources in the area.

People with a learning disability or autism, often need support to understand and action correspondence from utility companies. Information and guidance on the energy support available, reducing energy usage, keeping warm and safe at home and general communication with energy providers is often not offered in an accessible/ understandable way for those with a learning disability or autism.

Worthing Mencap

Worthing Mencap identified the lack of appropriate information and support for people with a disability in the Worthing area and addressed this through SGNs Safe and Warm Scheme supported by the Centre for Sustainable Energy in 2023. Through this project they supported 185 households with a disabled person to access accessible energy information and advice, with carbon monoxide safe awareness guidance. This project proved there is a demand for the service in Worthing. Working with partner charities across West Sussex they have identified this need is reflected across the county. Worthing Mencap have the partnerships, infrastructure and experience to scale this work up to reach a much larger pool of people with a disability across West Sussex.

Updated July 2024:

East Kent Mencap

East Kent Mencap supports people with a learning disability in two of the most deprived areas of East Kent, Swale and Thanet ([The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019](#)).

Thanet remains ranked as the most deprived local authority in Kent, ranked across deprivation for income, employment, health, education, and barriers to housing, crime and living environments for all local authorities. Swale is ranked as the second most deprived local authority in Kent across all measures.

The unemployment rate is high in both these areas, 4% in Thanet and 2.9% in Swale, UK unemployment rate was 3.8% in 2024, (source: Office for National Statistics 2024).

Kent has an estimated 64,093 households in fuel poverty, and Thanet has the highest fuel poverty rate at 15.8%, national average is 13.1% (source: Kent County Council Statistical Bulletin June 2024).

In East Kent, 281,423 people were registered disabled, 32,135 were in Thanet and 29,637 in Swale (source: Kent County Council Statistical Bulletin 2024).

Updated October 2024:

Croydon Mencap

Croydon Mencap supports people with a learning disability in Croydon which is one of the most populated and also deprived boroughs in London (The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019) / (www.trustforlondon.org.uk).

The Office of national statistics shows that unemployment is rising in Croydon, currently at 6% of the population, having the worst health outcomes of all London boroughs, with overcrowding, homelessness and housing affordability are major issues in Croydon at the current time. With poor performances in education compared to other London boroughs and premature mortality within the general population, as cited above people with learning disabilities will endure higher levels of inequality due their disability and vulnerabilities compared to the general population. It is therefore presumed that people with learning disabilities will be experiencing worse outcomes at the current time in Croydon.

There are increased mortality rates among people with disabilities and especially people with disabilities from, Black Asian and minority Ethnic backgrounds, this is due to a variety of compounding issues including poor health outcomes and Fuel poverty. Croydon as a diverse borough will naturally see inequalities specifically in these groups. 54,852 are registered as disabled in Croydon (<https://www.croydonobservatory.org/2-disability/>) which is approximately 15% of the population of Croydon. Croydon has around 7,500 adults with learning disability in Croydon and on the LD (Learning Disability) register. Croydon runs at double the national average for adults with a learning disability per capita. The national average is 1.3% of LD adults per population area. Croydon runs a circa 2.7% of the population being LD adults.

13.9% of households in Croydon North live in fuel poverty according to the National Energy Action and this number is set to increase with the increasing energy prices. The research funded by the Department of Social Policy and Social Work found that a greater proportion of households with disabled people are fuel poor compared with households that do not have disabled people and that they had difficulties of maintaining adequate levels of warmth, had poor levels of energy efficiency and or inadequate heating systems (www.nice.org.uk). It is therefore plausible that a significant number of households with people with a learning disability in Croydon could be experiencing fuel poverty as disabled people are more disproportionately affected.

Updated January 2025:

Reading Mencap

Reading Mencap supports people with a learning disability in greater Reading, Berkshire. Reading is the largest town in England with 174,200 residents ([Office for National Statistics, 2021](#)) and the second most ethnically diverse in the Southeast. 46.5% of Reading's overall population and 49% of the school population belongs to ethnic minorities (Office for National Statistics). Pupils speak around 77 different languages as their first language.

Although Reading is a relatively wealthy town overall, in reality, it is the third most unequal town in terms of wealth, with 5 neighbourhoods within the 10% most deprived in the country (Index of Multiple Deprivation). 7,290 households (10.7%, Reading Borough Council, 2024) are living in fuel poverty in Reading.

There are 3,300 adults with a learning disability in Reading aged between 18 and 64 (Projecting Adult Needs & Services Information) and in 2021 there were 1,436 Education, Health & Care Plans for young people. Approximately 450 adults are accessing Adult Social Care services.

In Reading, the rate of unemployment for adults with a learning disability known to social care is 95.3%, meaning most people with a learning disability rely on benefits as their main source of income. This limited income combined with rising energy costs put people with a learning disability at risk of living in fuel poverty.

Energy advice has been identified as a priority for households where there is a person with a learning disability due to the financial, safety and health & wellbeing implications on people with disabilities and their families.

Often people with a learning disability struggle to understand the cost implication of keeping their heating on all day and can face huge bills when doing so for long periods of time. In turn, this can lead to high debt and an inability to manage fuel bills. Moreover, disabled people often face higher energy costs due to their medical needs and the requirement to heat the home, for example, becomes integral to them keeping well. Circulatory issues, respiratory conditions and mobility issues are common among Reading Mencap's clients, and the risk of low body temperatures can exacerbate these conditions and make them much more susceptible to illness and possible hospitalisation.

3 Scope and objectives

By working in partnership with Mencap, the objective of the partnership is to work to enable them the targeted support for vulnerable households who may be experiencing barriers to accessing services, to help alleviate fuel poverty and increase energy safety awareness.

Through the partnership we will directly reach households of vulnerable people with a disability in with bespoke and targeted household support. This will cover:

- Providing accessible energy advice and guidance on reducing energy usage
- Providing information on the Priority Services Register and support where required to help identified vulnerable households to sign up for support
- Providing benefit eligibility checks to ensure household income is maximised
- Develop and use accessible energy advice and safety resources and tools for people with a learning disability and autism
- Run energy information and advice/ carbon monoxide safety workshops to disabled people and their carers
- Providing accessible information on carbon monoxide safety and where required provide free carbon monoxide alarms
- Providing access to the Locking Cooker Valve where required
- Providing training to staff/volunteers on energy safeguarding services including how to identify fuel poverty, carbon monoxide harm and how to describe the benefits of registering to the Priority Services Register
- Providing access to debt advice and support
- Offer a 'Warm Hub' service where required.

Worthing Mencap

Delivered via an in-house Energy Advice Co-ordinator the service will work with already established links with service providers across West Sussex to reach people to access the project's support. These service providers include: Aldingbourne Trust, Dimensions UK, Signposts Mid Sussex, Guildcare, Ferring Country Centre, Job Centre Plus across West Sussex, West Sussex County Council. They will also seek to form new links with other

service providers as well as working with West Sussex County Council to identify further pockets of demand within the disabled community within the county.

This project aims to address the barriers disabled people face in understanding and accessing the energy support that is available to them if they are in or at risk of fuel poverty in West Sussex. It will also provide vital energy safety awareness in an accessible way that will significantly reduce risk to health at home. This will give disabled people equal access to support to alleviate fuel poverty.

Updated July 2024:

East Kent Mencap

Following the success of the Worthing Mencap partnership, East Kent Mencap will reach people with a learning disability/difficulty and their families/carers, living in highly deprived areas of East Kent, with energy awareness, advice and support.

In addition to the above, East Kent Mencap will appoint 8 Energy Champions. These will be people with a learning disability that use East Kent Mencap services, they will promote accessible energy advice to their peers and encourage 1:1 referrals to the East Kent Mencap Energy Coordinator.

Updated October 2024:

Croydon Mencap

Building on the success of Worthing and East Mencap partnerships, Croydon Mencap, will work across Croydon's three planning areas (South, East and North) and across six localities (Southwest, South East, North West, North East, Central East and West); to reach vulnerable households who may be experiencing barriers to accessing services, to help alleviate fuel poverty and increase energy safety awareness.

Through the partnership they will directly reach households of vulnerable people with a disability in Croydon, Surrey to provide a dedicated in-house Energy Advice Co-ordinators who will give targeted household support. This will cover:

- training to staff/volunteers on energy safeguarding services including how to identify fuel poverty, carbon monoxide harm and how to describe the benefits of registering to the Priority Services Register
- accessible energy advice and guidance on energy usage developed and tailored to the needs of people with learning disabilities and autism
- information on the Priority Services Register and support to sign up
- benefit eligibility checks to ensure household income is maximised
- energy workshops for disabled people and their carers
- tailored carbon monoxide safety advice and free carbon monoxide alarms
- onward referral for a Locking Cooker Valve where required
- Providing access to debt advice and support
- Offer a 'Warm Hub' with health and fitness activities available for 6 days a week across Croydon 6 localities supporting boroughwide inclusivity

This project aims to address the barriers disabled people face in understanding and accessing the energy support that is available to them if they are in or at risk of fuel poverty in Croydon and Surrey. It will also provide vital energy safety awareness in an accessible way that will significantly reduce risk to health at home. This will give disabled people equal access to support to alleviate fuel poverty.

Updated January 2025:

Reading Mencap

Further building on the success of the above Mencap partnerships, Reading Mencap will work across Greater Reading to reach individuals and families who are at risk of, or who are already living in fuel poverty, or experiencing financial hardship, including those who require a warm home for medical reasons. Reading Mencap's existing Family Support Service, which provides information, advice and casework for their clients,

will provide energy awareness, and bespoke advice and support, including support to overcome barriers to accessing services.

As Reading is such an ethnically diverse town, Reading Mencap will be particularly targeting minority communities (including those who may struggle to access services due to language/cultural barriers), including by working closely with their partner, the Alliance for Cohesion & Racial Equality (Acre) and Acre's Alafia project, which supports ethnic minority families who have children or young people with additional needs or disabilities.

4 Why the project is being funded through the VCMA

This project is proposed for funding through the Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) which aims to work with households experiencing fuel poverty. This project does this by providing direct support to people with learning disabilities and their families who are struggling to maintain a safe and warm home.

The project delivers against SGNs Vulnerability Strategy, by providing targeted support to disabled people, most at risk of living in fuel poverty based upon their personal circumstances.

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 support to those people in some of the priority groups and in the regional communities most at risk, providing information on using 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 2 (3 & 4)

5 Evidence of stakeholder/customer support

5.1 Worthing Mencap

Worthing Mencap's vision is to enable people with disabilities, primarily those with a learning disability to lead full and independent lives. Their mission is to champion the rights and provide support to people with disabilities, primarily those with a learning disability and their families, carers and supporters. This is achieved through a range of opportunities and services in the Worthing and surrounding area to enable them to lead independent lives engaging fully in the local community.

As part of their commitment to their vision and mission they have delivered Information, Advice and Support services for people with a disability since 2010, called the My Network service. This service was developed out of the need for people with a disability to have access to appropriate support if they did not meet the threshold for funded Social Care support from the Local Authority. Universal access services were not able to provide the depth of support required to meet the needs of people who have cognitive barriers to communication, understanding and process. This meant that they were left behind and the demand for Social Service' crisis intervention was higher.

The service has evolved to become a key function for preventative services for people with a disability in West Sussex, with a countywide network of My Network services. People can self-refer to the service or be referred by a professional from another local service. The service supports people with various aspects of managing independent living, but a large gap in this provision since its conception has been the capacity and professional knowledge to give real focus on energy utilities. The scope of which includes managing energy accounts, accessing energy support/ benefit schemes, understanding bills, saving money on energy, staying safe & warm

in winter. This gap was partly addressed in Worthing through a pilot project through SGN's Safe and Warm communities project where Centre for Sustainable Energy provided training and resources to deliver help in 2023.

5.2 Case Study and Feedback

Feedback – individual

James has a mild learning disability and lives independently in the community. James' energy tariff had come to an end, he took the letter he had received from his supplier into our Support Co-ordinators to help him read and understand it. Our support co-ordinator explained what his options were and supported him to shop around for a better deal. James now feels empowered to know he doesn't have to stick with the same supplier when his tariff finishes, and he knows where he can access support if he is unsure about his energy bills.

'The information I got was easy to understand and afterwards I felt like I understood what was happening. Lorna helped me to get my energy cheaper from another company. She also gave me some good tips to stay warm at home without turning the heating on.' James – Service User

Feedback – organisation – Frontline supported tenancies.

'Our residents have benefited hugely from the energy advice and guidance provided by Worthing Mencap. Following on from the 'Being Energy Efficient' and 'Carbon monoxide awareness' workshops they delivered at our resident's support hub some of the people we support have been able to reduce their energy use and save money, which is vital for them as the majority of people are in receipt of benefits as their main source of income. Emma was able to support those not on the priority services register to sign up, so that they are reassured if anything goes wrong in the area, they will be top of the list to be supported.' Frontline Supported Tenancies -

Case Study

Sue is in her 40's, she is autistic and is living independently in the community. She recently moved to the Worthing area from Crawley to be closer to her mother who is requiring more family support for her age-related needs. Although Sue wanted to move to be closer to her mother, she also finds change very stressful and difficult to deal with due to her autism. There was a high risk that Sue would not cope well with the scale of this change and ignore the vital moving home tasks required as they are viewed as 'too stressful to think about'. This would have a detrimental impact on her mental and financial wellbeing in the long term.

Sue was being supported by the My Network drop-in support service in Crawley, run by Dimensions UK in a county-wide partnership with Worthing Mencap (and other providers). The My Network Support Co-ordinator in Crawley contacted their Worthing counterparts to begin the transition of support for Sue before she moved. This included a supported visit to the My Network drop-in support service at Buddys community cafe in Worthing, run by Worthing Mencap, before her moving date. The two Support Co-ordinators linked together to help Sue take meter readings before leaving her old property in Crawley.

Our Worthing Support Co-ordinator who had received energy advice training from SGN met with Sue at Buddys a week after she moved into her new property. At this appointment Sue was supported to give her final meter readings to her old energy supplier and arrange a final bill. Due to Sue's autism, she is only able to cope well with actioning one task at a time, she would find it overwhelmingly stressful to attempt to action too many tasks and would shut off from tasks if they became too stressful.

At the next appointment Sue was supported to set up an account with the energy suppliers at her new property. Whilst setting up her new account the provider was informed of her need to be on the Priority Services Register and flagged that she may be eligible for the Warm Home Discount later on in the year.

Sue was also supported with making the relevant changes to things such as her Universal Credit claim, other utility accounts and subscriptions at other appointments.

Once the priority moving home tasks had been undertaken and Sue was more settled into her new home, she attended an energy advice and carbon monoxide awareness quiz at Buddys. Here she learnt about tips to stay warm at home whilst using less energy and the dangers and indicators of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Over a long period of time Sue has settled into living in Worthing. She feels on top of her energy accounts and is able to access support to understand her bills through the My Network service. If her bills start becoming too expensive Sue now has the knowledge and skills to cut down her energy usage to try and save money whilst still staying warm at home.

Without our specialist support at a very stressful time for Sue she would have just ignored all of the key tasks required to be undertaken when she moved house, because they would have been too overwhelming to carry out on her own. If she didn't action these tasks, she would be in debt to energy suppliers for a property she no longer lived in. She would not have set up accounts and paid bills for her new property. This would eventually get on top of her and spiral out of control, with issues becoming so complex they would require a much higher level of intervention at a much higher cost to statutory services. This in turn would put her tenancy; independence; financial, mental and physical health & wellbeing at significant risk. Universal access Information and Advice services would not have had the skills or afforded the time that Sue required, due to her autism, to deliver the support she needed.

Following our support Sue is safe and warm at home.

Updated October 2024:

Case Study from Croydon:

Evie is a single parent with two children, aged 10 years and 14 months. The 14 months old baby is diagnosed with Down Syndrome. Evie and her children were recently evicted from their home and had to move into temporary housing. Evie needed support to get settled in her new house. After she moved in, she found herself with no heating and was worried for her and her children's health and didn't know how to get started sorting out this particular situation. She had no experience searching for, comparing prices, getting quotations, and finally registering with a new energy company. Our parent advocate supported her to get two new heaters temporarily and then supported her to identify and register with energy suppliers offering the best deals at the time.

Evie was also supported to apply for a discretionary housing fund for further support. Evie feels empowered, has acquired knowledge and experience she can rely on for future purposes, and is less stressed. She now knows she has multiple options if she needs to change suppliers and is aware she can seek support from our parent advocates if she ever needs it. Evie is also confident to ask for more help if she needs to.

Evie confirmed during a follow-up appointment that she is happy the house is now warm, and her daughter is improving her milestones because she can now move freely in the warm.

Updated January 2025:

Case study from Reading:

Imran has a learning disability and mental health problems and lives with his wife Alina and three children, two of whom also have a learning disability. Alina speaks very little English and is reliant on Imran for communication outside the home.

Imran contacted us because the family were experiencing racial and disability hate crime from their neighbours, and they were desperate to move. An adviser in our Family Support Service worked closely with social care and housing professionals and supported the family to move to a new home. She became aware that Imran had very little understanding about the need to give notice to his energy suppliers before the move. He was also very anxious that he was in debt on his prepayment meter, as he didn't fully understand the set up.

On the day of the move, our adviser supported Imran to contact his supplier and resolve any confusion with the meter. She helped Imran to give notice and, once in the new home, supported him to switch energy suppliers and ensured that he was signed up to the Priority Services Register. Imran now feels more confident in managing his energy account and knows that he can access additional support from his supplier if needed. He also knows that he can ask for additional support from our adviser.

5.3 SGNs Vulnerable Steering Group

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 help people who are living with a disability. In 2024 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

The partnership will directly support disabled people with accessible support to maintain a safe and warm home.

Worthing Mencap

My Network Energy Advice will provide the following outcomes for people with a disability in West Sussex:

- Be provided with easy-to-understand information on how to save on energy costs through reducing usage and staying warm with alternative methods, via EasyRead documents
- Be provided with easy-to-understand information on available energy support
- Be supported to join the Priority Services Register - providing security and support needed in the event of an unplanned outage from their regional utility companies and ensure that their suppliers are aware of any additional communication needs
- Be supported to understand their eligibility to access various benefits. E.g. PIP, Universal Credit, Carer's Support Allowance through a My Network Adviser
- Be provided with information of where they can access future energy support and guidance
- Increased confidence and mental wellbeing to know they are in control of managing their utilities
- Be provided with easy-to-understand information on carbon monoxide safety
- Access to carbon monoxide safety alarms for their home
- Access to Locking Cooker Valves
- Be supported to reduce the risk of entering into debt with their energy suppliers
- Be supported to effectively manage any current debt with energy suppliers

Wider outcomes will be:

- Providing access to a 'Warm Space' for the Worthing community
- Providing more skilled and knowledgeable Information and Advice workforce for people with a disability across West Sussex
- Providing more energy related tools and resources available to help professionals supporting people with a disability.

Updated July 2024:

East Kent Mencap

East Kent Mencap will provide the following outcomes for people with a disability in East Kent through the My Network Energy Advice:

- People with a learning disability will have the opportunity to become trained Energy Champions with energy safeguarding awareness and carbon monoxide safety awareness, and be confident to share knowledge with their peers
- Provide easy read information on energy advice, energy safeguarding, the Priority Services Register, carbon monoxide safety, and advice on how to get further energy advice support
- Provide easy read information and advice about how to reduce getting into debt with energy suppliers, how to manage any debt and how to get onward support
- Awareness of the benefits of the Priority Services Register and support to join it, which will give individuals additional support if there is an unexpected energy service interruption and the confidence that they will get the support in a way that is suitable for their needs
- Greater knowledge and confidence about energy usage and how to get further help if they need it
- Access to carbon monoxide safety alarms for their home
- Access to Locking Cooker Valves for their homes

Wider outcomes will be:

- Opportunity for the Thanet community to use a warm hub
- Increased knowledge for employees that support individuals with a learning disability in East Kent on energy safeguarding, the Priority Services Register and carbon monoxide safety
- Access to energy information and resources for employees that support individuals with a learning disability in East Kent.

Updated October 2024:

Croydon Mencap

The following outcomes for people with a learning disability in Croydon:

- People with a learning disability in Croydon will be trained as Energy Champions with energy safeguarding awareness and carbon monoxide safety awareness, and be confident to share knowledge with their peers

The partnership will also;

- Provide easy read resources and workshops to help residents understand their energy bills
- Sign post them to further available support in the borough minimising getting into debt, support them to remain Carbon monoxide safe and to manage debt
- Support with accessing available benefits to help with rising energy bills and keep warm
- Getting Carbon Monoxide alarms or replacements in their homes and how to respond / who to contact when one goes out
- Access to workshops that provide information on how to keep homes warm during cold months using affordable and reusable options like homemade draft blockers
- Access to Locking Cooker Valves for their homes
- Access to the weekly coffee morning where information on keeping warm and gas safety will be routinely shared with residents
- Help individuals analyse their bills, compare prices with the different suppliers and identify savings

- Awareness of the benefits of the Priority Services Register and support to join it, which will give individuals additional support if there is an unexpected energy service interruption and the confidence that they will get the support in a way that is suitable for their need
- Greater knowledge and confidence about energy usage and how to get further help where possible.

Wider outcomes will be:

- Opportunity for the learning Disability Alliance to create social interaction for the residents accessing the coffee morning and the community warm hub which will help to reduce isolation
- Increased knowledge for employees and volunteers that support individuals with a learning disability in Croydon on energy safeguarding, the Priority Services Register and carbon monoxide safety
- Access to energy information and resources for employees that support individuals with a learning disability in Croydon will be facilitated through our website and mobile app.
- Creating opportunities for the ambassadors and volunteers with learning disabilities to be active and productive members of their community

Updated January 2025:

Reading Mencap:

Reading Mencap will provide the following outcomes for people with a learning disability and their carers in Greater Reading:

- Provision of 1:1 information and advice for individuals and families who are at risk of or who are already living in fuel poverty or experiencing financial hardship
- Access to group workshops providing information and advice around carbon monoxide safety, the Priority Services Register, energy safeguarding and measures to improve warmth in the home, such as draught proofing
- Provision of Easy Read resources on energy advice, energy safeguarding, carbon monoxide safety and the Priority Services Register
- Support to sign up for the Priority Services Register, to get priority help from energy suppliers in the event of a power cut
- Support to access benefits eligibility checks through signposting and referrals, including supported referrals, to other partners/services in Greater Reading
- Support to access debt advice through signposting and referrals, including supported referrals, to other partners/services in Greater Reading
- Referrals to Social Services including ongoing support around accessing social care. In instances where poverty and an unheated home could cause health issues or contribute to neglect where there are children involved; a safeguarding referral would be made
- Access to carbon monoxide alarms
- Access to Locking Cooker Valves
- Access to fuel vouchers

Wider outcomes will include:

- Increased identification through provision of 1:1 information and advice of those who are unable to keep their home sufficiently heated, to enable targeted and personalised interventions based on the client's unique needs and circumstances
- Ability to reach a wider audience through group workshops, including 'harder-to-reach' families and ethnic minority families
- Clients have greater knowledge and confidence about keeping safe and warm at home and managing their energy utilities

- Increased knowledge for Reading Mencap employees on energy safeguarding, the Priority Services Register and carbon monoxide safety
- Access to energy information and resources for Reading Mencap employees.

6.2 Success Criteria

Worthing Mencap

Through our partnership, we will be able to effectively support people with a disability, their families and carers in the West Sussex area to be safe and warm at home.

We will use key outcomes to measure success:

Reach a total of 1,875 vulnerable households with information on reducing energy usage, carbon monoxide awareness and supported access to the Priority Services Register.

- Provide training to 10 members of external staff delivering Information and Advice to people with a disability on energy safeguarding services including how to identify fuel poverty, carbon monoxide harm and how to describe the benefits of registering to the Priority Services Register
- Deliver 900 1:1 energy advice and support appointments which includes CO safety discussions, support to sign up to the Priority Services Register and a benefit eligibility check
- Deliver 200 accessible energy advice (including carbon monoxide awareness and PSR info) group workshops to at least 1,400 people with a learning disability or autism and/or carers
- Deliver at least 20 information stalls at specialised events through the network of partnerships for disabled people, providing CO awareness, PSR information and referrals into the 1:1 appointments for at least 200 people.
- Distribute 200 carbon monoxide alarms to households without a working alarm
- Identifying 50 households that would benefit from an LCV and onward referral to SGN
- Support 20 people to receive debt advice or better manage their debt and an onward referral to NEF for a home visit to explore ways in which energy efficiency can be increased
- Over 8,000 walk ins across 2 years to our 'Warm Hub' at Buddys in Worthing.

Updated July 2024:

East Kent Mencap

East Kent Mencap's partnership with SGN will reach 1,510 people with a learning disability/difficulty and their families/carers over an 18-month period, by delivering the following:

Training

- Provide Energy Safeguarding training to 8 people with a learning disability that use East Kent Mencap services. They will mentor their peers, refer individuals to the Energy Coordinator, promote the energy advice work and act as Energy Champions across East Kent Mencap
- Provide National Energy Action Level 3 Energy Awareness training for the East Kent Mencap Energy Coordinator
- Provide National Energy Fuel Debt Advice in the Community Level 2 for the East Kent Mencap Energy Coordinator and the Delivery Manager
- Provide carbon monoxide awareness training to 47 East Kent Mencap Housing & Community employees in partnership with the Gas Safe Charity

Workshops and events

- Provide 18 drop-in's offering 1:1 accessible advice and support on energy safeguarding, carbon monoxide safety, the Priority Services Register and how to register, and how to reduce getting into debt with energy suppliers and support with onward referrals for debt help, reaching 180 people

- Deliver 36 accessible energy advice workshops on energy safeguarding awareness and carbon monoxide safety awareness, reaching 432 people
- Deliver information stalls at 18 third party specialised events, providing information on energy advice awareness, carbon monoxide safety awareness and the benefits of the Priority Service Register, reaching 360 people
- Partner with 10 organisations to deliver accessible advice and information on energy safeguarding, carbon monoxide safety, the Priority Services Register and how to register, and how to reduce getting into debt with energy suppliers and support with onward referrals to 'Yes Energy Solutions', reaching 200 people
- Support 27 people with a learning disability and/or their carer to receive debt advice and income maximisation support with an onward referral to 'Yes Energy Solutions' for 1:1 debt support, including ways to save money on energy, eligibility checks on funding schemes, and a free energy advice pack
- The workshops and events will capture unassessed people with a learning difficulty and individuals with a dual diagnosis, reaching 26 people. These individuals will receive accessible advice and support on energy safeguarding, carbon monoxide safety and how to register for the Priority Services Register
- Register 90 households up to the Priority Service Register
- Following the carbon monoxide safety awareness at workshops and events, distribute carbon monoxide alarms to 205 households without a working alarm
- Identify 55 households that would benefit from a Locker Cooker Valve and onward referral to SGN
- Warm Hub at East Kent Mencap's GOLD (Getting On with Learning Difficulties) project and East Kent Mencap's ScrapStore, where individuals will be provided with easy read information about energy safeguarding and carbon monoxide safety, reaching 250 people
- Winter readiness marketing campaign providing information on the Priority Services Register and tips on energy safeguarding measures, via East Kent Mencap social channels reaching 5000 people.

Updated October 2024:

Croydon Mencap

Through the partnership, Croydon Mencap will be able to effectively support 5,223 people with a Learning disability, other disabilities and their families and carers in the Croydon borough to be safe and warm at home.

We will use key outcomes to measure success:

- Train 4 Croydon Mencap staff in Fuel Debt Advice in the Community 6281-16 (C&G Level 2 Award) and 2 staff in Energy Awareness 6281-01 (Level 3) via National Energy Action
- Provide training to 50 members of external staff delivering Information and Advice to people with a disability on energy safeguarding services including how to identify fuel poverty, carbon monoxide harm and how to describe the benefits of registering to the Priority Services Register
- Deliver 1,953 1:1 energy advice and support appointments which includes CO safety discussions, support to sign up to the Priority Services Register and a benefit eligibility check
- Deliver 150 accessible energy advice (including carbon monoxide awareness and PSR info) group workshops to at least 2,500 people with a learning disability or autism and/or carers
- Deliver at least 35 information stalls at specialised events through the network of partnerships for disabled people, providing CO awareness, PSR information and referrals into the 1:1 appointment for at least 770 people
- Support 40 people to receive debt advice or better manage their debt and an onward referral to NEF for a home visit to explore ways in which energy efficiency can be increased
- Sign up 500 households to the Priority Services Register
- Distribute 200 carbon monoxide alarms to households without a working alarm

- Identifying 50 households that would benefit from an LCV and onward referral to SGN

Updated January 2025:

Reading Mencap will support 375 people to be safe and warm at home through the partnership with SGN. We will use key outcomes to measure success:

- Deliver 200 1:1 energy advice and support calls/appointments/visits to include CO safety discussions, information about fuel vouchers and the Priority Services Register, and how to access a benefits eligibility check
- Deliver 10 accessible online or in-person energy advice group workshops (including carbon monoxide awareness and PSR info) to at least 100 people with a learning disability or autism and/or carers
- Deliver at least 10 information stalls at specialised events through the network of partnerships for disabled people, providing CO awareness, PSR information to 200 people and referrals into the 1:1 appointment with either the Reading Mencap Energy Adviser or Yes Energy Solutions/NEF for at least 25 people
- Support people to ensure they are accessing the PSR and directly sign up or support 35 people to do so themselves
- Support 15 people to access other crisis support – food, clothing or housing with an onward referral to ReadiFood, Shelter or Cowshed
- Support 15 people to access specialist benefits advice with onward referral to Reading Welfare Rights
- Support 15 people to receive debt advice or better manage their debt and an onward referral to Citizens Advice Reading, including supported referrals
- Distribute 35 carbon monoxide alarms to households without a working alarm
- Distribute 40 fuel vouchers to households in crisis
- Identify 7 households that would benefit from a Locking Cooker Valve and onward referral to SGN
- Deliver a winter readiness marketing campaign providing information on the Priority Services Register and tips on energy safeguarding measures, via Reading Mencap social channels, website and mailing list, reaching at least 750 people.

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, carbon monoxide alarms

Worthing Mencap - delivery and coordination of service

The partners will continue to closely work with a network of local disability service providers to identify eligible people for the service across West Sussex including; Aldingbourne Trust, Dimensions UK, Signposts Mid Sussex, Guildcare, Ferring Country Centre.

Other partners include: West Sussex County Council, Borough and District Councils, DWP & Job Centre Plus – across West Sussex, Carers Support West Sussex, Social Prescribers.

Updated July 2024:

East Kent Mencap will deliver and coordinate the service in East Kent.

Prospective partners include: SEND educational providers x10, local district councils, community groups, job centres x3, primary care networks, NHS health providers, learning disability providers, carers networks, social prescribers, Gas Safe Charity, and Yes Energy Solutions.

Updated October 2024:

Croydon Mencap will deliver and coordinate the service in Croydon.

A key partner will be The Learning Disability Alliance Croydon CIC.

Prospective partners include: Croydon Club Soda, Willow Skills for Life, Enterprise Lounge, Home-start Croydon, Croydon Voluntary Action, Croydon Health Homes, Bensham manor Resource centre, Alma care, Frontier Services, Kering, Croydon Council, Circle of parents services, Primary and Secondary Schools supporting SEND initiatives, Croydon College, Couldsdon college, John Ruskin College, Faith Organisations, strictly come walking, Young at heart Health and Fitness, Be Different365 Foundation Intergenerational Project, Joy Of Sound, 7up Taichi, Grow wild, Community and Family Hubs across Croydon, Leisure centres across Croydon, BME Forum, Croydon Vision, Tuff Project, NHS Southwest Learning Disability etc.

Croydon Mencap will also seek to form new links with other service providers as well as working with Croydon Council and councils within the borders (Sutton, Bromley and Merton) Council to identify further pockets of demand within the disabled community within the county.

Updated January 2025:

Reading Mencap will deliver and coordinate the service in Greater Reading.

Other current and prospective partners include Alliance for Racial Cohesion and Equality (ACRE); Reading Welfare Rights; Communicare; local SEND primary and secondary schools; Reading College; NHS health providers including primary care networks; Reading and West Berkshire Carers Partnership; Reading Borough Council.

8 Potential for new learning

Monitoring and evaluation

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

- Quantitative and qualitative customer outcomes
- Feedback questionnaires to ensure that the services are valued by those who use it
- 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
- Ongoing referrals from/to partners to ensure that we're delivering outcomes that address both crisis and long-term fuel poverty / health outcomes
- Each month we will review the progress of the support service to share ideas and challenges through individual and organisational partnership case studies.

Learning

We are keen to learn from this project and for successes to be incorporated into ongoing projects that engage with people with a disability and their families. Through working across Worthing, Adur and Arun 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.

During the pilot programme supported via SGNs Safe and Warm communities scheme supported by Centre for Sustainable Energy the team were able to create, test and further develop resources such as interactive online quizzes and EasyRead information documents. This insight helped to better understand people's support's priorities throughout the seasons relating to their energy needs, learning that will allow us to tailor our support and our messaging to people throughout the changing seasons through this ongoing partnership.

SGN will share the outcomes via stakeholder mechanisms including the SGN Safe and Warm partnership network the GDN Vulnerability Working Group as well as via the VCMA Annual Showcase and VCMA Annual Report.

This project has the potential to be upscaled as a model, working with other GDN's, enabling more people living with a cognitive or learning disability stay safe, warm and sometimes with greater confidence and independence at home.

Updated July 2024:

In addition to the above, East Kent Mencap will provide feedback from the East Kent Mencap's Energy Champions (people with a learning disability who use East Kent Mencap services) to better inform future energy messaging, information and support.

Updated October 2024:

This initiative will aim to tackle fuel poverty and address disparities experienced by people with learning disabilities and their carers who are more likely to experience fuel poverty. In order to ascertain that the programme is having the desired impact, the following will be done to monitor and evaluate progress:

- Easy read (where appropriate) pre and post contact questionnaires will be given to service users to ascertain that the programme is having impact and benefiting those being served.
- These questionnaires will be reviewed by the evaluators to enable continuous assessment of progress and where possible changes will be made to the delivery of services taking into account the feedback.
- Specific cases will be reviewed on a bimonthly basis to enable learning and development of staff and volunteer during the running of the programme.
- Members of the community will be invited to various community events to meet with project provider and discuss the being delivered providing an opportunity for face-to-face real time feedback but also giving project providers insight into the needs of this vulnerable demographic.

We hope that through ongoing evaluation of the progress of the programme, we will be able to learn about:

- The impact of fuel poverty on the health and wellbeing of people with learning disabilities and their families
- What practices the community are employing to manage their fuel poverty or lack of
- The challenges being faced by these communities and therefore work with them to identify area and ways in which to best support people with learning disabilities and their families, carers to better manage their energy / fuel needs
- This information will also allow us to adjust our services on an ongoing basis in order to provide a service that brings value to the Croydon community
- The outcomes of the programme will be used to support other vulnerable communities in Croydon and surrounding boroughs
- Through continuous case review, staff will be given opportunities to better comprehend service user needs, identify gaps in knowledge and therefore creating further learning and development opportunities that will allow for provision of improved and better services
- What the community needs and hence refocus our efforts and actions to better model our delivery and therefore achieve the outcomes as set out.

Updated January 2025:

Reading Mencap will build upon on the work currently being undertaken by Worthing, East Kent and Croydon Mencaps and is keen to learn from and share experiences with these existing partners to deliver effective support to communities in Reading. Sharing learning will result in improved understanding of target clients' needs, especially clients from ethnic minorities – learning which can be shared more widely with local authorities and Public Health, for example.

This project will enable Reading Mencap to expand its existing information & advice service offer to successfully help existing clients and reach new clients (including more people from ethnic minorities) in an area of support that is vital to the health and wellbeing of people with a learning disability and their families during the cost-of-living crisis.

Reading Mencap will also be undertaking similar monitoring and evaluation activities as outlined above. It is believed that this project will have a positive impact on our clients by reducing anxiety and stress, helping their financial situation, and improving their levels of safety and security in their homes.

9 Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations, including NPV

We worked with leading social impact research consultancy SIA Partners to develop a social value methodology aligning to the DNO Rulebook with additional GDN specific proxies. Using this methodology to carry out an in-depth assessment of the financial and wellbeing outcomes applicable to our services for vulnerable customers incorporated in this partnership we forecast a positive net social return of £6.65 over five years.

Social Value Measurement

Total cost*	£149,508.72
Total gross present value	£1,143,125.48
Net Present Value (NPV)	£993,616.76
SROI	£6.65

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

Updated July 2024

Using the new Industry Standard Social Value Framework and supporting GDN Rulebook we have carried out an in-depth assessment of the financial and wellbeing outcomes forecast for vulnerable customers incorporated in the update of this partnership and expansion into East Kent. When collated with our original SROI forecast above our revised overall net SROI forecast across the initial and extended project is £4.00.

Total cost*	£265,231.94
Total gross present value	£1,326,413.36
Net Present Value (NPV)	£1,061,181.42
SROI	£4.00

**Accounting for inflationary factors over the duration of the project*

Updated October 2024

Using the new Industry Standard Social Value Framework and supporting GDN Rulebook we have carried out an in-depth assessment of the financial and wellbeing outcomes forecast for vulnerable customers incorporated in the update of this partnership and expansion into East Kent. When collated with our original SROI forecast above our revised overall net SROI forecast across the initial and extended project is £7.65.

Total cost*	£674,443.09
Total gross present value	£5,835,257.23
Net Present Value (NPV)	£5,160,814.14
SROI	£7.65

**Accounting for inflationary factors over the duration of the project*

Updated January 2025

Using the new Industry Standard Social Value Framework and supporting GDN Rulebook we have carried out an in-depth assessment of the financial and wellbeing outcomes forecast for vulnerable customers incorporated in the update of this partnership and expansion into Reading. When collated with our original SROI forecast above our revised overall net SROI forecast across the initial and extended project is £7.37.

Total cost*	£706,571.16
Total gross present value	£5,912,597.49
Net Present Value (NPV)	£5,206,026.32
SROI	£7.37

*Accounting for inflationary factors over the duration of the project

10 VCMA Project start and end date

The project will run from April 2024 – March 2026 (2 years)

Updated July 2024:

The East Kent Mencap project will run from September 2024 – March 2026 (19 months)

Updated October 2024:

Croydon Mencap project will run from November 2024 – March 2026 (17 months)

Updated January 2025:

Reading Mencap project will run from March 2025 – March 2026 (13 Months)

11 Geographic area

West Sussex

Updated July 2024:

Adding East Kent

Updated October 2024:

Adding Croydon

Updated January 2025:

Adding Reading

12 Internal governance and project management evidence

SGN has worked alongside regional Mencap teams 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 internally assessed using the SIA Partners methodology and the DNO Rulebook / GDN proxies. As detailed above we have reviewed the current partnership scope which has been forecast at adding an additional £6.65 for each £1 invested, this will be monitored closely to ensure we adhere to the VCMA governance criteria.

SGN and Worthing Mencap 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.

Update July 2024

Our SROI forecast has been updated using the Industry Standard Social Value Framework and supporting GDN Rulebook to assess the social value generated by the update to this project. This update has given a revised positive net SROI forecast of £4.00 for each £1 invested.

Update October 2024:

Our SROI forecast has been updated using the Industry Standard Social Value Framework and supporting GDN Rulebook to assess the social value generated by the update to this project. This update has given a revised overall positive net SROI forecast of £7.65 for each £1 invested.

Update January 2025:

Our SROI forecast has been updated using the Industry Standard Social Value Framework and supporting GDN Rulebook to assess the social value generated by the update to this project. This update has given a revised overall positive net SROI forecast of £7.37 for each £1 invested.