

Warm Welcome Spaces Surrey

Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance

May 2024

Updated January 2025

SGN



SGN

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1 Description

Project title	Warm Welcome Spaces Surrey
Funding GDN(s)	SGN
New/Updated (indicate as appropriate)	Updated January 2025
Date of PEA submission:	June 2024 Updated January 2025
Project contact name:	Kerry Potter
Project contact email:	Kerry.potter@sgn.co.uk
Total project cost (£k)	£1,114,531 Updated January 2025 Additional cost = £1,231,940 Total project cost = £2,346,471
Total VCMA funding required (£k)	£920,019 Updated January 2025 Additional cost = £884,475 Total VCMA cost = £1,804,494

2 Problem statement

According to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, the number of households who are required to spend more than 10 per cent of their income (after housing costs) on domestic energy rose in 2023 to 36.4 per cent of households (8.91 million), up from 27.4 per cent in 2022 (6.66 million). Lower income households are more likely to respond to higher energy prices by cutting energy use below safe levels. Some will find themselves in the situation where energy will become unaffordable, resulting in self-disconnection or unmanageable energy debt.

Typical energy bills under the January to March 2024 price cap were almost 60% higher than in winter 2021/22. Although the price cap is lowering again from April this year, with no further cost of living payments scheduled, we can say with some certainty that the effects of the cost-of-living crisis will continue to be felt by our residents. DESNZ have also reported that rising housing costs have brought an estimated 51,000 households into fuel poverty this year and “after considering energy rebates, energy efficiency and household changes the overall required energy costs increased by 27 per cent between 2022 and 2023 in real terms. The change in energy prices after government support is estimated to have increased fuel poverty by around 238,000 households over this period.”

Nationally, Citizen’s Advice helped over 220,000 people with crisis support in 2023 – their highest figure to date. They are also seeing a marked increase in people presenting with complex problems, and multiple debts so when someone presents with energy issues, such as affordability, billing, and customer service, they also need support in other areas.

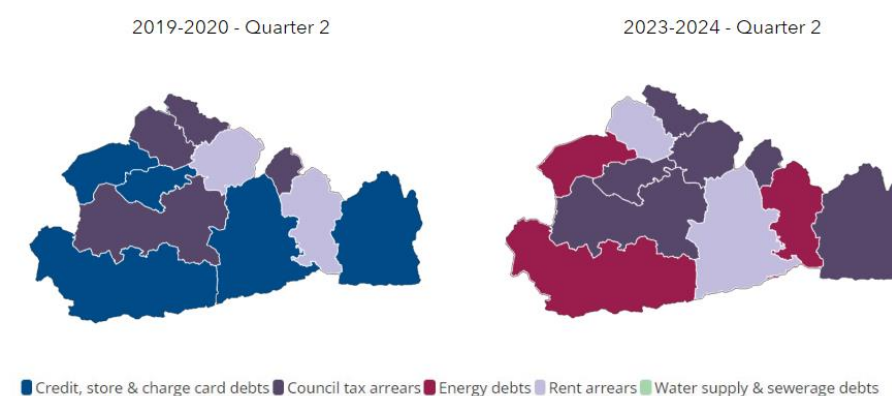
Although Surrey is often viewed as an affluent county, the effects of the Cost-of-Living Crisis and high energy prices are felt greatly in the areas of deprivation. Surrey has 21 areas of high need as identified by the Surrey Deprivation Index ([Key Neighbourhoods – Surrey-i \(surreyi.gov.uk\)](https://www.surreyi.gov.uk)). Tens of thousands of residents who live in these areas will experience fuel poverty once again this year, many of whom will already be vulnerable residents, and at risk of exacerbated ill health or death due to the inability to keep their homes properly heated because of rising energy costs.

Despite being seen historically as an affluent county, in Surrey, there was a 475% increase in people turning to charities for help between January and August of 2023. More than 10% of residents stated that they are “often” falling into arrears with their energy bills (August 2023) compared to 1.15% at same time last year. There are many residents who are impacted more acutely by the Cost-of-Living Crisis with disabled residents

still amongst the hardest hit with 97% of the Surrey Coalition of Disabled People's members said they had been impacted by the Cost-of-Living Crisis, 76% did not turn their heating on in winter 2022/23 and 43% are no longer able to meet the additional costs for a disabled person.

Since 2021/22, Surrey has received more than £26.4m from the Household Support Fund (HSF), and this has provided the basis for much of the practical financial assistance given by Surrey County Council (SCC) to those most impacted by rising living costs. Surrey has distributed the majority of the Household Support Fund directly, e.g. to provide support to care leavers and children from low-income families, and through Surrey's districts and boroughs and the voluntary, community and faith sector. In 2022/23, 117,747 households were helped by the HSF, and the number helped in 2023/24 is expected to be the same or higher. The extension of the HSF until September 2024 is extremely welcome but leaves much uncertainty as to what support will be available to residents as we approach winter.

Fuel Poverty remains a key issue in Surrey, with the data¹ below showing that energy debts are now the top issues seen by Citizen's Advice in 3 of our boroughs.



Across Surrey, there are approx. 184,300 homes that are rated EPC D or below. Tackling poor energy efficiency in homes across Surrey will have a long-lasting impact on residents and the percentage of people falling into fuel poverty. Despite the existence of government grants and schemes, there are still many barriers to residents in the uptake of this support. Following research carried out by the University of Surrey², our partners and stakeholders have discussed the key barriers to the uptake of grants to improve the thermal comfort of homes - and thereby reduce health issues and emissions. These were:

1. Digital exclusion, computer illiteracy, and the pressures of stress and anxiety associated with fuel poverty that prevent eligible residents from being able to complete funding applications
2. Physical difficulties that prevent many residents, particularly those in vulnerable categories such as the elderly and residents with disabilities, which prevent them from making even small energy efficiency improvements to their home and heating system, whilst making preparation for large impact measures impossible, such as the clearance of lofts or gardens / pathways for the installation of loft or cavity wall insulation respectively

Many residents sign up to energy efficiency grants to alleviate severe health and financial issues – but these issues are the very obstacle to progressing with the funding process because they cannot make preparations for the efficiency measures.

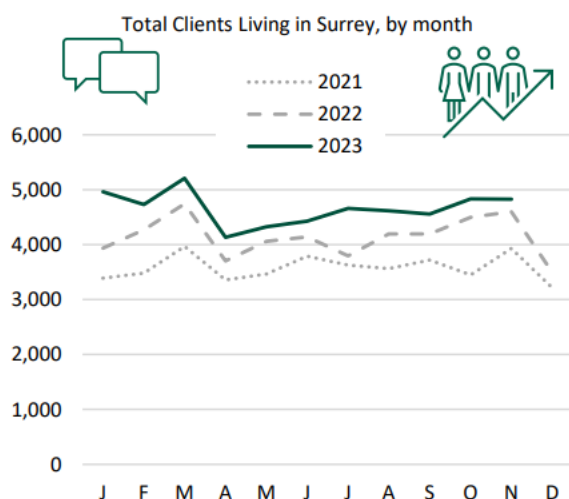
¹ Citizen's Advice Cost of Living Dashboard, [CA cost-of-living data dashboard | Flourish](#) (accessed on 08/04/2024)

² The Leaky Pipeline Project: Final Report, Dr Tom Roberts, [Leaky Pipeline Final Report V2.docx](#)

Updated January 2025

This year, the government announced a change to the Winter Fuel Payment eligibility criteria. Last winter in Surrey, 213,279 payments were made totalling almost £84 million. This year, that number is expected to drop significantly as the current number of residents receiving pension credit is 14,146. This will affect many pensioners this winter and has increased public attention towards fuel support and we are expecting an increase in demand on our services as a result. In a recent survey of Surrey residents, over 1/3 of respondents said they had been impacted by the changes. Through our partnership we've been working with Age UK Surrey and SSAFA (Armed Forces Charity) to ensure residents are supported in applying for pension credit and know where to go for additional support. Ofgem have also announced a rise to the Energy Price Cap, up to £1,738 from January 2025. It is still far above the levels seen pre-pandemic when it was £1,089. In addition to this, although the number of households in fuel poverty has plateaued nationally in recent years, the number of households in "energy distress" (households struggling to pay energy bills) has sharply increased.³ Ofgem noted that the debt and arrears by customers to suppliers has risen substantially, and it now stands at £3.82 billion.⁴

Citizen's Advice Surrey have stated the number of clients identified as living in Surrey who were supported has increased year-on-year over the past three years for every month. A selection of issues have been presented in this table as they experienced growing numbers of clients in 2023 and may be relevant when considering the rising cost of living. The number of Surrey residents who discussed food banks is consistently high at over two thousand residents (with an increase of 20 per cent over the last year). Compared to the previous year, the number of clients with fuel issues rose by 83 per cent.



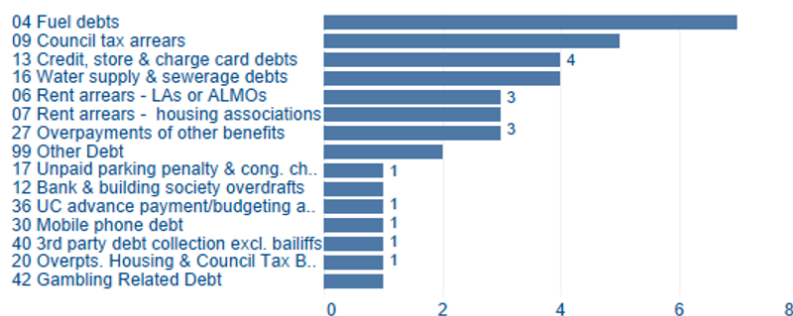
	Previous year (Dec 21 – Nov 22)	Dec 22 – Nov 23	Yearly change	% Change
Fuel (gas, electricity, oil, coal etc.)	507	926	419	83%
Council tax arrears	162	289	127	78%
Bank & building society overdrafts	14	21	7	50%
Mortgage & secured loan arrears	40	60	20	50%
Rent arrears - housing associations	64	92	28	44%
Other telecoms debt (landline, broadband, bundle, TV)	5	7	2	40%
Magistrates Courts. - fines & compensation order arrears	28	39	11	39%
Actual homelessness	202	273	71	35%
Catalogue & mail order debts	6	8	2	33%
Arrears of income tax, SEISS, CJRS, VAT or NI contributions	8	10	2	25%
Localised social welfare	755	916	161	21%
Food Banks	2,072	2,478	406	20%
Unpaid parking penalty & congestion charges	72	83	11	15%
Threatened homelessness	597	680	83	14%

In 2024, Citizen's Advice Surrey helped 2,575 Surrey residents with energy and fuel issues.

³ 'Can Fuel Poverty be Ended? The Committee on Fuel Poverty Annual Report 2024; Published 28/08/2024

⁴ 'Debt and Arrears Indicators'; www.ofgem.gov.uk; Published 10 December 2024

Top debt issues



3 Scope and objectives

Working in partnership SGN and Surrey County Council will continue to build on the support framework which has been in place since 2022 to maximise the offer for 2024/25. The partnership will provide access to information to all Surrey residents on how to stay safe and warm in winter. As well as the data presented above, key learnings from the scheme show that residents are attending with a wide range of issues and needs, demonstrating the importance of adapting the approach and support available to meet each individual's needs.

Warm Welcome Sessions

Through the partnership we will continue to deliver the Warm Welcome sessions, reviewing the venue locations and services to ensure maximum resident uptake. The partnership will continue to prioritise areas of high need as identified by the deprivation index, as well as in areas identified as most in need by front line workers. These spaces will provide vulnerable residents living in hard-to-heat homes, and those experiencing fuel poverty, with a welcoming location at which they can warm up and have a free hot drink, whilst receiving energy and financial support advice. Based on previous year's feedback, SCC will organise events at the venues which are tailored to different groups in the community, which will encourage higher footfall and extend the reach of the support. Many residents find it difficult to 'open up' about their issues to strangers straight away so having regular sessions with a range of activities can be a very good starting point for developing trust and building relationships.

Through the Warm Welcome venues, we aim to support 35,000 vulnerable residents, providing tailored advice and support provisions to improve health, wellbeing, and financial outcomes. The spaces will be delivered through a mix of volunteers, Surrey County Council staff, and charity partners. The Warm Welcome sessions will take place in a range of venues, including libraries, church halls, and community centres, and will offer:

- A place for a hot drink, social interaction, and wellbeing activities. Free meals will be provided where possible, depending on facilities available
- Energy advice and debt support from trained advisers and volunteers and our partner organisations
- Winter essentials including items to help vulnerable residents stay warm
- A catalogue of support services and resources to signpost residents to additional support
- Mental Health First Aid trained volunteers who can identify residents in need of support and signpost them to the correct health services
- Emergency support for those in fuel crisis through provision of fuel vouchers
- Surrey Fire and Rescue Service visits to offer fire safety and carbon monoxide advice, as well as the offer of home visits to fit smoke and carbon monoxide alarms
- Activities that support the health and wellbeing of residents
- Through partnering with our public health teams, we will also offer 22 slow cooker courses for attendees
- Distribution of winter essential items through our continued partnership with Club 4 children's activities
- Energy Efficient Cooking Appliances for vulnerable residents with no other means of cooking.

The Warm Welcome venues will continue to be a one stop shop and a single point of entry for accessing support.

Warm Welcome Partnerships

To ensure we offer maximum support to our residents, we will once again partner with key organisations across the county:

SCA Warmth Matters

As part of our Warm Welcome offer, SCA Warmth Matters will provide in depth energy support to attendees. They will offer a bespoke mix of sessions, such as 'Energy Advice Desk', '1-1 Energy Health Audit', 'Warmth Matters Craft Session for Adults' and 'Energy Saving Craft Session for Children'. They will also target vulnerable cohorts through project work, engaging with other partners to help a wider range of people from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) community, elderly people, Asylum Seekers, and residents living in rural areas.

Citizen's Advice

Citizen's Advice will be offering Advice First Aid training to the volunteers and partners at our Warm Welcome venues. This is a needs assessment triage service, where volunteers will identify the problem, provide some initial help and also know when, and how, to call in experts to assist with more complex issues. The training provided will help volunteers to:

- identify common advice problems
- build confidence about how to start and have supportive conversations
- develop knowledge about what local resources and organisations are out there to offer help, including Citizens Advice and our team of expert advisers; and energy saving measures
- better find the right support together
- know how to refer people for support

The Surrey Coalition of Disabled People

We have learned this year that not all residents are able to attend our Warm Welcome venues, and we want to make sure that no one is left behind, so we will bring the warm welcome to them. Working in partnership with the Surrey Coalition of Disabled People, we will provide their members with additional in-home support to enable them to apply for much needed energy efficiency grants and support, including signing up to the PSR. We will also provide a winter warmer add on to their home food parcel service, as many disabled residents are still making the difficult choice between heating and eating. They will receive the same information provided at our Warm Welcome venues and will be fully supported by the Coalition and SCC.

Through the above partnerships, there is a clear path for residents to get support, no matter their circumstances, whether they need general advice, bespoke energy support, in depth financial assistance or immediate crisis support.

Additional Services

In addition to the Warm Welcome services outlined above, we will be carrying out a range of work to enhance what we can offer to our residents:

- Residents who are in immediate crisis will be referred to the Surrey Crisis Fund team. The Surrey Crisis Fund provides financial help to Surrey residents who have nowhere else to turn in an emergency or following a disaster. It also can provide assistance to set up a home in the community where no other funds or resources are available.
- Care Leavers will be provided with Fuel Payments to enable them to transition into independent living more easily and to ensure they do not accumulate debt upon leaving care
- We will provide frontline worker training to ensure staff have the skills to identify residents who may be living in fuel poverty or cold homes and the knowledge to know how best to support them. Through this scheme, we aim to train at least 700 staff members across SCC and the NHS

- Working with I Choose Freedom, we will support domestic abuse survivors living in refuges across Surrey. Many of their clients arrive with little to no belongings and find winter incredibly difficult to cope with and need essential items. We also want to support those residents who are resettled permanently in Surrey by providing energy support sessions to them as part of the resettlement process
- There are many hard-to-reach residents living in fuel poor homes across the county, and in conjunction with Zero Carbon Guildford, we will focus on providing energy efficiency surveys for these homes, to ensure that residents are supported in the longer term
- We will also work to unblock the uptake of energy efficiency grants currently on offer to residents by removing two key barriers – digital exclusion and preparation for energy measures. Digital exclusion will be tackled by our Digital Welfare project, run through SCC libraries, and we will partner with our Greener Futures teams to assist residents in preparing for energy measures to be installed, such as loft clearance for insulation upgrades.

Updated January 2025

Together we're keen to build on the work we have done to be a convener for support this year by strategically coordinating support for those most in need via community, voluntary and charitable organisations across the county.

Our programme will focus on working with stakeholders in the community to ensure we are targeting the right residents and ensuring we are staying up to date with local demand. Our programme is engaged with the Community Partnerships and Prevention teams, as well as many organisations in the charity, voluntary and community sector.

This year we have made an increased effort to act as a convener for support and to link up all our partners to each other to ensure the maximum benefit is realised for our residents. In order to build on this work and target a wider demographic of residents, we would aim to engage with more partners this year and engage the voluntary sector such as Surrey Minority Ethnic Forum, youth and schools' colleagues to explore what support is needed across the county.

Our Warm Welcome scheme will continue as previously, alongside our partnerships with SCA Warmth Matters, Citizen's Advice, Surrey Coalition of Disabled People and the Surrey Crisis Fund.

We have seen the impact of central government policies this winter on residents and the partnership will also look to increase skills training to support long term benefits realisation for those most in need. Working with Citizen's Advice, the partnership will train and support their staff to carry out more benefits checks (including PIP applications and Pension Credit). Citizen's Advice are already assisting residents with a huge variety of energy and fuel issues and can make a huge difference to household income with increased benefits checks. We also plan to increase our support to the Surrey Crisis Fund team as they are successfully helping those most in need across the county. This will lead to increased income for residents over a number of years, beyond the timeframe for the partnership. This forms part of our strategy to move the focus from immediate crisis support to long term skills training.

Using the LIFT (low-income family tracker) software, we will be able to target specific residents who are eligible for support or in need of assistance. We will begin with a pension credit campaign sent directly to residents who we know are eligible for pension credit but not receiving it. This software will also allow us to directly target fuel poor homes, where people are struggling financially. We may also be able to identify through LIFT residents who would benefit from being on the Priority Services Register and can send information on how to sign up directly to them.

Smart meters play a key role in ensuring residents are able to see their energy usage, and enact behaviour change, and they also allow suppliers to identify those who may be in need of support. Through promotion and training volunteers through NEA we'll explain the benefits of smart meters to residents.

To support young families in crisis we're adding in a new service to distribute warm packs to children living in low-income families and those at risk of poverty and providing age-appropriate information and worksheets with each warm pack covering ways to be energy efficiency and more carbon monoxide aware.

4 Why the project is being funded through the VCMA

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

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

This partnership has been externally assured by SIRIO Strategies for Social Return on Investment and goes above and beyond our core responsibilities as a Gas Distribution Network and is eligible under the VCMA funding criteria as it will provide energy crisis support, access to energy efficiency and CO advice, empowering vulnerable households to use energy safely, efficiently, and affordably.

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

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

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

5 Evidence of stakeholder/customer support

5.1 Surrey County Council – stakeholder feedback

Our partners working in the SCC Club 4 team described the items we provided as “amazing”, with over 50 separate providers they work with wanting the hats and gloves.

Our partnership with the Surrey Crisis Fund has had a huge impact on the immediate crisis support they can provide to residents. “We are all so happy that we are receiving this extra support from your team... We are very grateful to the Fuel Poverty team for your part in enabling us to continue our work.” “It really is much appreciated. It will certainly help us to scale back our plans to reduce our offer.”

SCA Warmth Matters “we’re finding the more we are in the same venue the clients feel more comfortable approaching us for advice... Working within the community we feel the need is still very much there for our support.”

5.2 Warm Welcome Surrey 2023/24 customer feedback

The feedback from our service users has been overwhelmingly positive and shows the impact the programme is having on people's lives.

“We received a 'thank you' from a gentleman to show appreciation for the help we offered a friend of his; he described what we offer as a lifeline.”

“People find it an essential part of their week and often say they hope it continues.”

"The sessions are well-loved and are, therefore, well-attended. They are meeting a great need and a great demand. People enjoy the opportunity to keep warm, receive winter essentials, and receive warm hospitality."

"The advice on saving money and the hooded blankets are a godsend, but it was knowing I am not alone."

"I believe having something to look forward to gives attendees more emotional resilience and this can help with their own resourcefulness and mental energy levels."

"It's a place to socialise and meet new people. People feel very welcome. The meals are lovely. There is a personal touch, and the volunteers often ask Warm Hub users if they'd like to help doing small tasks so they feel more part of the Hub."

"The Warm Welcome Space has been highly valued by people with the opportunity to engage in activities and spend time with others. They have also appreciated the warm clothing on offer during the cold months including woolly hats, gloves, scarfs and handwarmers."

"Our regulars are like a family now that we have been going for almost a year. They look out for one another and we are seeing friendships formed. They have also been amazing stepping up to help with the hospitality such as welcoming newcomers and helping with the washing up. We have built community and earned trust, and as a result our leadership team have had several people confide in us, about personal issues that they would not normally share with others. We follow our safeguarding procedures and refer for expert help as appropriate, but in the meantime we continue to offer community and a safe space, with no judgement, where people can be part of something, be truly themselves, and escape the isolation of being home alone."

Updated January 2025

Feedback from Warm Welcome attendees and our partners forms a vital part of where our priorities should lie for the year ahead.

Our partner the **Surrey Coalition of Disabled People's** Involvement Officer has described the positive impact our partnership has had on residents in Surrey with disabilities and long term health conditions: "I have been able to help our members make longer term reductions on their fuel bills by assisting them with signing up for the priority services register, checking what energy saving grants they are eligible for, and helping them to complete forms. The energy efficient microwaves and air fryers have also been a lifeline for those who didn't have another means of cooking. I asked some of our members about the difference it has made to them. They said:

"The air fryer has meant I can cook a proper cooked meal without being worried about the cost and more importantly not hurting myself. I cannot lift above my head or bend to take food out of an oven as it's often heavy and awkward. I use my air fryer every day. I have Osteoarthritis and Osteoporosis which causes great pain. I need to keep warm and having the extra money was extremely helpful." – C.B

"First of all, thank you for the time you took to call me back to offer some support regarding energy saving/use in my home. Your help has been greatly appreciated and so useful. The research you made to see what is available to me, the practical information, the pointing in the direction towards more helpful information and the referring for a survey with Surrey Energy Assessment. All this is being so helpful. To reduce how energy might be wasted because of poor insulation, to finding solutions, practical help in the house, the provision of accessories to help my home remain warmer, more energy sustainable, to help my bills to hopefully lower whilst keeping a warm house, as I am mostly housebound is so important. The help the Surrey Coalition of Disabled People is providing is making such a difference in my life.

From being completely isolated and unable to access most support by myself, the Coalition is being a guiding torch in my dark moments.

I am so grateful for the existence of the Surrey Coalition of Disabled People, every member making it work, every fund enabling help for the beneficiaries." - H.W.

Support provided through the energy project has already made a big impact on our members, and with the energy crisis set to continue, we hope that we can continue to offer this vital support in the coming years."

Citizen's Advice have shared a case study from a resident in Surrey they supported this year with their energy bills and debt:

A client approached Citizens Advice very overwhelmed about debt concerns. In spite of several attempts by the client and their daughter to address water, gas and electricity debts they had been unable to make any significant headway and were being threatened with legal action. Citizens Advice addressed the following key issues with the client:

1. The electricity and gas debts incorrect (and meter not working properly) and vastly overstated
2. The water debts were also over-stated (especially after Watersure discount applied and meter installed)
3. Council Tax debts should not have existed as the client is on PIP and means tested benefits. In fact, the client's over-payments of CT in last 2 years, would more than compensate for the restated and reduced utility debts.

As a direct result, the client was immensely grateful to CA adviser for their outcome and also being guided how to get there. The client acknowledged that without CA the outcome would have been very different.

Our Warm Welcome venues have continued to highlight the importance of this scheme to the most vulnerable people in their communities.

"One guest told us that his life has been transformed by the [Warm Welcome]. Another said they wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the [Warm Welcome]."

"The feedback has been 100% positive, and the numbers speak for themselves. Individuals are coming week after week and then telling their friends who also come along. Those attending are so grateful and happy that this opportunity exists. It is helping those attending to feel less isolated, and they can't believe the provision of things such as fuel vouchers and blankets etc are open to them."

"It is very positive. As well as being to save on fuel bills, we find that people (especially people with vulnerabilities) welcome the ability to meet and talk with others."

"With the cold snap residents have felt warm and safe and eating a freshly cooked meal together."

"People value the social interaction and sense of community. One lady who has come only once said that she came because she was feeling lonely and felt uplifted for being with us."

5.3 SGNs Vulnerable Steering Group (VSG)

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

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

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

6 Outcomes, associated actions, and success criteria

6.1 Outcomes

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

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

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

Updated January 2025

Our Warm Welcome scheme and partnerships will continue to achieve the outcomes set out last year. In addition, our other projects hope to achieve the following outcomes:

Smart Meter Promotion – The Smart Meter Promotion initiative aims to increase awareness and adoption of smart meters among residents. This will be achieved by distributing informative flyers and training volunteers to answer questions and assist individuals in applying for a smart meter. The goal is to empower residents with the knowledge and tools to better manage their energy consumption and costs.

Children's Warm Packs – The Winter Warm Packs for Children project focuses on providing essential winter supplies to children in need. These packs, distributed through schools and community groups, include items such as warm clothing and blankets. The objective is to ensure that children stay warm and healthy during the colder months, reducing the risk of illness and discomfort.

Citizen's Advice - Benefits Checks – To support residents in accessing the benefits they are entitled to additional funding will be allocated for staffing at Citizen's Advice. This will enable more comprehensive benefits checks, with a particular focus on assisting individuals with Pension Credit applications. The aim is to alleviate financial stress for vulnerable populations, especially the elderly.

Adults, Health & Wellbeing – A continuation of the comprehensive training programme for frontline staff across the Council, VCFS, hospital discharge teams, and other relevant sectors will be implemented using the MECC (Making Every Contact Count) approach. This programme aims to equip staff with the skills and knowledge to provide holistic support to residents, promoting overall health and wellbeing.

6.2 Success Criteria

Through the partnership we aim to deliver the following outcomes for residents, based upon our schemes delivered to date:

Target Figures	Total Residents Supported
Number of residents provided with information/advice on winter resilience planning, the Priority Services Register (PSR), carbon monoxide (CO) safety, and energy efficiency advice – including promotion of where to get help	483,854
Number of people attending/receiving hot drink and warm space	35,000
Fuel Vouchers to be distributed	2,000
Care Leaver Energy Support	850
Winter and Summer Essentials to be distributed	7,359
Food and Meal Support	5,000
CO Alarms distributed*	1,800
Customers supported with personalised energy & debt advice (in person /online)	5,230
Energy Efficient Cooking Appliances distributed	847
Advice First Aid – Volunteers trained	100
Frontline staff trained	740
Slow Cooker Classes	176
Properties cleared/prepared for energy efficiency measures	80 properties
Digital Skills Training provided to vulnerable residents	895
In Home Energy surveys to be completed	300

*Referred to Surrey Fire and Rescue Service for delivery.

Updated January 2025

Through the extension of this programme, we anticipate directly supporting 36,490 vulnerable households throughout Surrey. We anticipate a minimum of 10% of these will be repeat users of/visitors to the Warm Space's based on the nature and needs of their vulnerability.

Target Figures	Total Residents Supported – Including Additional Services
Number of households provided with information/advice on winter resilience planning, the Priority Services Register (PSR), carbon monoxide (CO) safety, and energy efficiency advice – including promotion of where to get help	483,854
Number of people attending/receiving hot drink and warm space	35,000
Fuel Vouchers to be distributed	2,500
Winter and Summer Essentials to be distributed	7,670
Food and Meal Support	6,000
Customers supported with personalised energy & debt advice (in person /online)	5,230
Energy Efficient Cooking Appliances Distributed	500
Advice First Aid – Volunteers Trained	40
In Home Energy Surveys to be completed	150
Smart Meter Promotion and Advice	1,000

Benefits Checks Carried Out	750
Care Leaver Energy Support	850
Digital Skills Training provided to vulnerable residents	200
Frontline Staff Trained	250
Slow Cooker and Air Fryer Classes	80
Children's Warm Packs	1,200

7 Project partners and third parties involved

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

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

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

SCC Adults, Health, and Wellbeing Team – delivery partners for frontline worker training. The training will cover staff in Primary Care, Home Care, Fire and Rescue, Housing, VCSE, Engineers, Meter Installers - with regard to the single point of contact for fuel poverty/CO safety measures and local support that residents can utilise.

SCC Greener Futures Team – delivery partners for our work to unblock the uptake of energy efficiency grants by assisting with preparation for energy measure installation, such as loft clearance for insulation upgrades.

SCC Libraries Team – delivery partners for our work to unblock the uptake of energy efficiency grants through their Digital Welfare programme. This is to tackle the barrier of digital exclusion and allow vulnerable residents to sign up for grants, the PSR and energy discounts.

Citizens Advice – Warm Welcome delivery partner who will train 100 volunteers as part of their Advice First Aid project. They will then accept referrals and support residents with in-depth debt advice and income maximisation.

Surrey Community Action Warmth Matters – A county wide charity providing in depth energy advice at Warm Welcome sessions through their “warmth matters” programme. They will also carry out a number of targeted projects to support vulnerable residents such as the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) community, elderly people, Asylum Seekers, and Rural residents.

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) – Our Fire and Rescue service will offer in home Safe and Well Visits to residents across the county, to ensure homes are safe from fire risks and CO leaks. They will smoke and CO alarms, and will distribute winter essential items, fuel vouchers and oil filled heaters where no heating system is in place. Their officers will also be trained to increase their knowledge of fuel poverty, how to identify those at most risk and where to send them for support.

Surrey Crisis Fund - Surrey Crisis Fund provides financial help to Surrey residents who have nowhere else to turn in an emergency or following a disaster. It can also provide assistance to set up a home in the community where no other funds or resources are available. They will distribute fuel vouchers to residents in immediate crisis and will supply energy efficient appliances to those without any means of cooking safely.

The Surrey Coalition of Disabled People – a county wide charity campaign and promote the rights of disabled people to have equality of opportunity and to live independently. In partnership

Zero Carbon Guildford - a charity that carry out energy efficiency surveys in homes across the county, to help residents identify what could be done to reduce their bills and keep their house warmer in winter. Once they carry out the thermal imaging survey, they distribute appropriate small scale energy efficiency items such as draught excluders and secondary glazing film. They also send the resident a report detailing what grants and support they are eligible for in terms of long-term solutions to improve their homes, including ECO4, GBIS, and HUG2, thereby increasing the likelihood of improving the thermal efficiency and comfort of their home and in turn lessening the likelihood of fuel poverty.

I Choose Freedom - a charity that provides refuge and a path to freedom for survivors of domestic abuse. They have three refuges that house women and children in Surrey. As part of their Refuge for All project, they also offer self-contained units to support any survivor. Practical assistance and advocacy are key elements of support offered by advocates who work for I Choose Freedom.

Updated January 2025

Age UK Surrey– Age UK Surrey are an independent local charity that provides services across the whole of the county to help people aged 50+ make the most of their life.

SSAFA – SSAFA is the Armed Forces charity which is a trusted source of support for serving personnel, veterans and their families in their time of need. SSAFA helps the armed forces community in a number of ways, though their focus is on providing direct support to individuals in need of physical or emotional care, covering areas such as addiction, relationship breakdown, debt, homelessness, post-traumatic stress, depression and disability.

Surrey Ethnic Minority Forum - Surrey Minority Ethnic Forum (SMEF) is a community organisation with charitable and company status, and it represents over sixty multi ethnic community and voluntary groups in Surrey and its surrounding areas. It is an umbrella organisation, bringing together over sixty grassroots community groups, voicing the diverse views of all ethnic minority communities living and working in Surrey, to strategic partners such as Surrey County Council, local and district councils, Surrey Police, Surrey Heartlands, and the NHS.

Policy in Practice - Policy in Practice is a social policy software and analytics company working with councils, government, housing providers and community organisations. They are a team of policy experts who combine cutting-edge tech, insightful data and expert analysis. They help organisations analyse the impact of policy, identify and engage the people impacted, and track the effectiveness of interventions.

8 Potential for new learning

Monitoring and evaluation

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

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

Learning

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

- An annual report will be disseminated across electricity, gas, and water networks, outlining project impacts, and sharing case studies.
- A comprehensive review of data and community feedback will guide enhancements for the winter of 2024/25. This review will include assessing the energy efficiency of host buildings and identifying opportunities to bolster the service's financial sustainability through local business involvement, community volunteers, and diversified funding sources.

Updated January 2025

In addition to the above methods of evaluation, we can utilise the LIFT (Low Income Family Tracker) software to identify home of multiple disadvantage and target these with interventions much more effectively. This will enable great outcomes and ensure that funding is going directly to the most vulnerable households.

We would also like to engage with any SGN stakeholder events, to highlight the successes of our partnership so far and help to showcase how this partnership model is so effective. As we approach the end of the price control period, we are happy to collaborate with SGN on possibilities to continue learning from the work we're doing in the longer term.

9 Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations

We worked with leading social impact research consultancy SIRIO Strategies to carry out an assessment of the financial and wellbeing outcomes applicable to our services for vulnerable customers incorporated in this partnership. Carrying out an in-depth assessment of the predicted outcomes we forecast a positive net social return of £1.95

Social Value Measurement

Total cost*	£1,106,816.67
Total gross present value	£3,270,153.12
Net Present Value (NPV)	£2,163,336.45
SROI	£1.95

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

Update January 2025

We and the other Gas Distribution Networks worked with leading social impact research consultancy SIRIO Strategies on the development of the Industry Standard Social Value Framework and supporting GDN Rulebook. We have used that GDN Rulebook to carry out an assessment of the financial and wellbeing outcomes applicable to our services for vulnerable customers incorporated in the extension of this partnership. Carrying out this assessment of the predicted outcomes and collating with the original SROI forecast, we forecast a revised net Social Return on Investment of £4.57 for the overall partnership.

Total cost*	£1,991,291.67
Total gross present value	£11,094,812.72
Net Present Value (NPV)	£9,103,521.05
SROI	£4.57

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

10 VCMA Project start and end date

The project will run from June 2024 to March 2025.

Update January 2025

The project has been extended through to March 2026

11 Geographic area

Surrey

12 Internal governance and project management evidence

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

The SROI has been externally assessed by SIRIO Strategies using industry standard social value framework and associated GDN rulebook. As detailed above SIRIO have reviewed the current partnership scope which 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.

SGN and Surrey County Council 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 January 2025

The SROI for the original partnership was assessed in conjunction with SIRIO Strategies and forecast at providing a net SROI of £1.95. For the extension of this partnership and the associated outcomes, we have used the GDN Rulebook developed by SIRIO Strategies as part of the Industry Standard Social Value Framework to forecast the social value and SROI. As detailed above we have reviewed the extension scope which when combined with the original SROI forecast gives a revised overall project forecast SROI of £4.57 for each £1 invested. This will be monitored closely to ensure we adhere to the VCMA governance criteria.