

Wales & West Utilities Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)

Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA)

Gas Safety Ambassadors

Wales & West Utilities

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December 2022

Updated November 2024

Eligibility criteria for company specific projects (other than condemned essential gas appliance repair and replacement)

In order to qualify as a VCMA Project, a project must:

- a) have a positive, or a forecasted positive, Social Return on Investment (SROI) including for the gas consumers funding the VCMA Project;
- b) either:
 - i. provide support to consumers in Vulnerable Situations and relate to energy safeguarding, or
 - ii. provide awareness of the dangers of CO, or
 - iii. reduce the risk of harm caused by CO;
- c) have defined outcomes and the associated actions to achieve these;
- d) go beyond activities that are funded through other price control mechanism(s) or required through licence obligations; and
- e) not be delivered through other external funding sources directly accessed by a GDN, including through other government (national, devolved or local) funding.¹

Eligibility criteria for company specific essential gas appliance servicing, repair, and replacement

In order to qualify as a VCMA Project, unsafe pipework and essential gas appliance² servicing, repair or replacement must meet the following criteria:

- a) a GDN has to isolate and condemn unsafe pipework or an an essential gas appliance following a supply interruption or as part of its emergency service role;
- b) the household cannot afford to service, repair or replace unsafe pipework or the essential gas appliance; and
- c) sufficient funding is not available from other sources (including national, devolved or local government funding) to fund the unsafe pipework or the essential gas appliance servicing, repair or replacement.

¹ If part, but not full, funding is available through an external funding source for an eligible project, VCMA funding can be used for the remaining amount.

² Essential gas appliances are gas fuelled heating systems (including gas boilers and gas fires), and gas cookers.

Information required for the registration of VCMA projects

Information required	Description										
Project title	Gas Safety Ambassadors (GSA)										
Funding GDN(s)	Wales & West Utilities										
New/ Updated PEA	GDN to state whether this is a new or updated PEA										
VCMA Project contact name, email and number	Original - December 2022 Updated – November 2024										
Total Cost (£)	Original project costs: 2022 - 2025 = £25,200 Updated November 2024: 2024 - 2026 = additional £12,570 (uplifted and extended)										
Total VCMA funding required (£)	Updated November 2024: £37,770 <table border="1" data-bbox="502 801 1109 913" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <thead> <tr> <th>2023</th> <th>2024</th> <th>2025</th> <th>2026</th> <th>Total GD2</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>£8,700</td> <td>£12,,920</td> <td>£12,920</td> <td>£3,230</td> <td>£37,770</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total GD2	£8,700	£12,,920	£12,920	£3,230	£37,770
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£8,700	£12,,920	£12,920	£3,230	£37,770							
Problem(s)	<p>The Problem:</p> <p>We are committed to raising awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO) and educate customers on how to keep them and their family safe. We provide key gas safety information on how to safely maintain their appliances and how to reduce the risk of CO in their home.</p> <p>We also want to raise awareness of the potential dangers that may be present whilst we are conducting our work. As we are working out in the public, we want to make sure that we raise awareness of the keys things to be mindful of around our sites to help keep customers safe</p> <p>What is Carbon Monoxide (CO)?</p> <p>You can't see it. You can't smell it. You can't taste it. Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colourless, odourless, tasteless, poisonous gas that is released when any fossil fuel doesn't burn properly.</p> <p>Breathing it in can make you unwell, and it can kill. Even low levels of exposure, over a long period, can cause serious health issues.</p> <p>Severe CO poisoning causes approximately 60 accidental deaths per year in England and Wales (NHS). Exposure to carbon monoxide at sub-lethal levels cause non-specific symptoms, (e.g., headaches, nausea, dizziness). This means exposure to carbon monoxide could be under-reported.</p> <p>Low awareness of CO:</p>										

Criteria

	<p>Research has shown that awareness of CO remains low and is lowest in young adults, with only a quarter understanding the risks or what to do if they suspect the presence of CO.</p> <p>Our figures in 2021 revealed that those who we interacted with had an average awareness of 4.8/10 in relation to the dangers of CO.</p> <p>Gas and CO safety customer research carried out collaboratively by all GDNs in 2020 showed awareness of CO poisoning fatality was significantly lower amongst younger people (82% for 16-24yr olds compared to 92% overall) and this age group is far less likely to have a working audible CO alarm (26% compared to 63% of 65 – 74yrs) and less likely to think it important to have gas appliances annually services (79% compared to 97% for 65-74yr olds). It also showed that nearly half (49%) of 16-24yr olds thought that CO had a smell. This signified that this is a cohort who are at greater risk due to their attitude to CO risks and associated preventative measures.</p> <p>Site Safety Risks for Children:</p> <p>Compass reported that each year 2 or 3 children die after gaining access to construction sites and many more are injured. Some children are drawn to construction sites as exciting places to play.</p> <p>Why are younger people more at risk?</p> <p>Children are more at risk from unsafe gas practices as they are not always in control of their environment and are reliant on adults in keeping them safe. This means that they have little control over whether the people they live with service their appliances or get an audible CO alarm.</p> <p>From a health perspective, children are at higher risk for CO poisoning because they breathe faster than adults. CO can build up in a child’s body and replace oxygen in their blood. The child’s brain, organs, and tissues can be damaged from a lack of oxygen. A child may have long-lasting (permanent) damage to the brain or heart. This depends on the amount of CO exposure. Severe carbon monoxide poisoning can cause nervous system symptoms days or weeks later. This is known as delayed neurologic syndrome. In some cases, CO poisoning can lead to death.</p> <p>ROSPA reports that children under the age of five years and people in later life (those over the age of 65, and particularly those over 75) are most likely to have an accident at home</p> <p>Engaging at the right level:</p> <p>HSE conducted research around health and safety attitudes in young people which showed how the importance of Health and Safety was widely recognised. The young learners talked about wanting H&S information to be clear, concise, and relevant, with an explanation of the</p>
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Criteria

	<p>risks and the response in language they could understand and a format that they were able to visually engage with.</p>
<p>Scope and Objectives</p>	<p>In our Business Plan for RIIO GD2 we made a commitment to reach at least 10,000 people a year through either face-to-face contacts, or by providing educational materials; demonstrating success by a CO survey of understanding before and after the engagement. We will target all ages and demographics with our messages.</p> <p>In addition, we committed to reaching 250,000 homes a year with CO awareness messaging through our usual communications for connections, planned and emergency work, and through social media channels.</p> <p>Our Ambition:</p> <p>To keep people safe by; raising awareness of the risks of CO arising from both appliances connected to the mains gas network and other sources, to effect behaviour change to safeguard all those at risk, and to provide access to suitable CO safety devices for people who may struggle to access one themselves.</p> <p>Objective:</p> <p>Actively look to reduce the risk associated with unsafe gas practices and dangers around our sites by providing free accessible and engaging awareness sessions to our communities to help keep them and their families safe.</p> <p>We will do this by:</p> <p>December 2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruiting and training colleagues to become Gas Safety Ambassadors to deliver key safety messages in the communities we serve - Encouraging those who have received safety information to share messaging with friends and family - Recording data to demonstrate the impact of visits and materials such as awareness of CO before and after sessions to demonstrate a % increase in awareness - Actively targeting areas that are most at risk (including but not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o those living in socially deprived areas o those living in a CO hotspot area o those living in areas where we are carrying out planned work <p>Updated November 2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working with third party organisations to deliver vital safety messaging (in addition to the above)

Criteria

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased focus on additional target audiences such as vulnerable adults and other key demographics <p>The Scope:</p> <p>December 2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with colleagues through planned works and emergencies to identify key target audiences, and provide free awareness sessions in schools or other planned events - Design fit for purpose material that covers the key information which is available in various languages and formats (slides, videos etc.) <p>November 2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with colleagues and partners such as Bollo through an event called 'Crucial Crew' to provide free awareness sessions in schools or other planned events across our network - Working closely with our planning teams to identify key target audiences in the areas affected by our works - Design fit for purpose material that covers the key information which is available in various languages and formats (slides, videos etc.)
<p>Why the Project is being funded through the VCMA, and how this aligns to GDN's VCMA Strategy</p>	<p>November 2024 (new section):</p> <p>Wales & West Utilities does not own or bill customers for their gas consumption, however, through stakeholder engagement, we recognise our role in making sure gas is used safely, and efficiently.</p> <p>This project 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 efficiency advice and CO safety advice and interventions, empowering each householder to use energy safely, efficiently, and affordably.</p> <p>This project aligns to our commitment to deliver support service for those who are most in need aligned to four key strategic pillars (shared ambition and approach with GDNs):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Services Beyond the Meter 2. Supporting Priority Customer Groups 3. Fuel Poverty & Energy Affordability 4. Carbon Monoxide Awareness <p>This project aligns to strategic pillar 4.</p>
<p>Evidence of Stakeholder/ Customer support</p>	<p>In our business plan, we provided extensive evidence of support from stakeholders for us to continue to raise awareness of CO.</p> <p>At a stakeholder prioritisation and value for money workshop, attendees ranked investment in CO awareness raising, alongside other vulnerability support as their top priority.</p>

Criteria

	<p>During discussions between our 30-strong representative Citizens’ Panel on supporting people living in vulnerable situations, participants commented on the significant potential impacts of carbon monoxide poisoning and the need to ensure the safety of customers in relation to this issue.</p> <p>During extensive GD2 business planning customer and stakeholder engagement in 2018 and 2019, there was overwhelming support for increased investment to support people in vulnerable situations, including raising awareness of the risks of CO for at-risk groups.</p> <p>Further customer research carried out in 2020/21 to trend customers’ prioritisation of GD2 delivery commitments and attitudinal profiling, showed that supporting investment in consumer vulnerability including raising awareness of CO risks, remained a highly-ranked customer priority – fourth in a ranking of 25 customer priorities.</p>						
<p>Outcomes, associated actions, and success criteria</p>	<p>December 2022:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="501 875 1110 2011"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="501 875 699 1115"> Anticipated Project outcomes (the difference it will make) </th> <th data-bbox="699 875 935 1115"> Associated Actions (what we will do to achieve the outcome) </th> <th data-bbox="935 875 1110 1115"> Success Criteria (How we know the outcome has been achieved) </th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="501 1115 699 2011"> <p>People feel more in control knowing the dangers of CO to be able to keep them and their families safe and able to share that information.</p> <p>Customers are better informed of the role that WWU play in keeping their communities safe and have a better awareness of who to contact in a</p> </td> <td data-bbox="699 1115 935 2011"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide vital gas & site safety information and what actions to take in an emergency. • Educate customers who are affected by our replacement or emergency work on key safety information • Deliver appropriate messaging around site </td> <td data-bbox="935 1115 1110 2011"> <p>We will use the return data from our forms and feedback surveys to continually review the impact this programme is having on colleagues and those engaged.</p> <p>Look to use incident data (safety related incident reports) and complaints data from our REPEX</p> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Anticipated Project outcomes (the difference it will make)	Associated Actions (what we will do to achieve the outcome)	Success Criteria (How we know the outcome has been achieved)	<p>People feel more in control knowing the dangers of CO to be able to keep them and their families safe and able to share that information.</p> <p>Customers are better informed of the role that WWU play in keeping their communities safe and have a better awareness of who to contact in a</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide vital gas & site safety information and what actions to take in an emergency. • Educate customers who are affected by our replacement or emergency work on key safety information • Deliver appropriate messaging around site 	<p>We will use the return data from our forms and feedback surveys to continually review the impact this programme is having on colleagues and those engaged.</p> <p>Look to use incident data (safety related incident reports) and complaints data from our REPEX</p>
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	<p>gas emergency</p> <p>Customers are given broader information on general gas safety, so they know what to do in an emergency ultimately keeping themselves and their community safer</p> <p>Children are provided with a for-life message that they can take home to their family members to help keep them safe</p>	<p>safety to educate people about the dangers they may face on our sites</p>	<p>work to tailor future content</p>	
	<p>Colleagues can deliver safety measures in the communities they serve to keep people safe and provides them with a greater sense of job satisfaction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus our efforts by actively targeting CO hotspot postcodes and areas of deprivation • Actively book sessions in areas where WWU REPEX work is being carried out 	<p>We will carry out reviews with our GSAs bi-monthly to review the content they are delivering and obtain their feedback for potential adaptation to the programme</p>	

Criteria

	<p>November 2024 (refer to above table for listed outcomes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Directly reach 7,000 people per annum - Provide 4000 take home packs to primary school pupils, which will contribute to an indirect reach by sharing with friends and family - Deliver at least 10 full Gas Safety Ambassador sessions - Attend at least 30 Crucial Crew led event days across our network in collaboration with Bollo 											
Project Partners and third parties involved	<p>December 2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WWU Colleagues and operation workforce - Schools and educational facilities <p>November 2024 (in addition to the above):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3rd party organisations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Bollo 											
Potential for new learning	<p>November 2024 (new section):</p> <p>We will work closely with schools and other education facilities to monitor the impact of the delivery sessions to ensure they are impactful and delivering the safety messaging as outlined in the proposal.</p> <p>We will continue to seek feedback from the communities who receive the sessions around CO safety messaging and shape future session based on this feedback by embedding lessons learnt and sharing best practice.</p>											
Scale of VCMA Project and SROI calculations, including NPV	<p>December 2022:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="501 1290 1385 1429"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">5-year Results</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td rowspan="4" style="background-color: #333; color: white; text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">Economic</td> <td>Total cost</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£24,211.47</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total gross present value</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£89,848.86</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NPV</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£65,637.39</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SROI</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£2.71</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>SROI Updated November 2024:</p> <p>We have taken the forecasted numbers expected to be delivered by Gas Safety Ambassadors throughout the delivery period and calculated the following SROI over the duration of the project:</p> <p>Total Gross Present Value = £20,454.55 Net Present Value = £9,102.22 Positive SROI per £1 spent = £0.29</p> <p>Please note that the updated SROI calculation was completed using the GDN-shared SROI rulebook released in September 2024, which produces stricter and more accurate results compared to previous models.</p>	5-year Results		Economic	Total cost	£24,211.47	Total gross present value	£89,848.86	NPV	£65,637.39	SROI	£2.71
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VCMA Project start and end date	<p>Original: September 2022 – December 2025 Updated (extended): September 2022 – March 2026</p>											

Criteria

Geographical area	This project will cover the whole of Wales & West Utilities networks (Wales & South West England).
Internal governance and project management evidence	<p>WWU will have monthly reporting sessions to capture the outcomes from each of the GSA sessions and will manage the partnership with Bollo by undertaking monthly meetings.</p> <p>We will ensure that learnings from the project and experience of third party organisations delivery are used to refine future sessions to maximise outputs and outcomes making the messaging impactful and meaningful</p> <p>As per our internal governance this project has been reviewed by our Customer & Communities Steering group who are fully supportive of this initiative backed by Stakeholder Engagement.</p>