

Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)

Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA)

Pathways to Stability

Nicola Campbell – Community Safeguarding Partnership Lead

January 2024

(Updated February 2026)



Gas Network Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) Governance Document - Project Eligibility Criteria

Section 1 - 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:	
VCMA Eligibility Criteria	Criteria Satisfied (Yes/No)
a) Have a positive, or a forecasted positive, Social Return on Investment (SROI) and Net Present Value (NPV) including for the gas consumers funding the VCMA Project (GDNs should use a common SROI model.	Y
b) Either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Provide support to consumers in vulnerable situations, and relate to energy safeguarding, or ii. Provide awareness on the dangers of CO, or iii. Reduce the risk of harm caused by CO; 	Y
c) Have defined outcomes and the associated actions to achieve these;	Y
d) Go beyond activities that are funded through other price control mechanism(s) or required through license obligations; and	Y
e) Not be delivered through other external funding sources directly accessed by a GDN, including through other government (national, devolved or local) funding.	Y
Section 2 - Eligibility criteria for company-specific essential gas appliance servicing	
To qualify as a VCMA Project, essential gas appliance servicing must meet the following criteria:	
a) Either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. A GDN has had to isolate and condemn an essential gas appliance following a supply interruption or as part of its emergency service role; or ii. A GDN or its Project Partner has identified an essential gas appliance which has not been serviced in the last 12 months in the owner-occupied home of a customer in a Vulnerable Situation where an occupier of the property suffers from a permanent or temporary health condition that makes them more vulnerable to health risks associated with cold homes; or iii. A GDN or its Project Partner has identified an essential gas appliance which has not been serviced in the last 12 months in a tenant-occupied home of a customer in a Vulnerable Situation where it is the tenant's responsibility to maintain the essential gas appliance, where an occupier of the property suffers from a permanent or temporary health condition that 	N/A

makes them more vulnerable to health risks associated with cold homes.	
b) The household cannot afford to service the essential gas appliance, which is assessed against criteria consistent with the Energy Company Obligation (ECO4) Guidance: Delivery document1 (see Appendix 1).	N/A
c) Sufficient funding is not available from other sources (including a social or private landlord, national, devolved, local government funding) to fund the essential gas appliance service.	N/A

Section 3 - Eligibility criteria for Collaborative VCMA Projects	
To qualify as a Collaborative VCMA project, a project must:	
a) Meet the above company-specific and boiler repair and replace (if applicable) project eligibility criteria;	N/A
b) Have the potential to benefit consumers on the participating networks; and	N/A
c) Involve two, or more, gas distribution companies.	N/A

Gas Network Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA) Governance Document - Project Registration Table 2

Information Required	Description
Project Title	Pathways to Stability
Funding GDN(s)	Cadent
New / Updated (indicate as appropriate)	New VCMA Project
Role of GDN(s) *For Collaborative VCMA Projects only	N/A – Company specific project
Date of PEA Submission	January 2024 Updated February 2026
VCMA Project Contact Name, email and Number	Contact Name: Phil Burrows Contact Title: Head of Customer Vulnerability Social Programme Delivery Contact Number: 07773545451 Contact Email: phil.m.burrows@cadentgas.com
Total Cost (£k)	Partner costs: £90,000.00 Supporting material costs: £1,000 Project management costs (4%): £3,640 <u>Updated February 2026</u> Partner costs: £180,000.00

	Project management costs (4%): £7,200.00
Total VCMA Funding Required (£k)	£94,640.00 Updated February 2026: £187,200.00
Problem(s)	<p>In Coventry, an increasing number of individuals are struggling with debt and navigating the complexities of welfare benefits. According to a recent study by Fair4All Finance, Coventry was one of a handful of Midlands towns to make the list of ranked towns and cities based on the number of adults living in “financially vulnerable circumstances”, with 51% of people categorised as financially vulnerable.²</p> <p>Rising living costs, coupled with limited financial literacy, have left many residents in vulnerable situations, facing financial insecurity and uncertainty about their rights and entitlements. Despite the availability of some services, access to free, reliable, and timely advice is increasingly limited due to funding cuts and overburdened support systems. This gap disproportionately affects low-income households, marginalised groups, and those unfamiliar with welfare systems, exacerbating inequalities and financial distress. There is an urgent need to expand accessible, free advice and support services in Coventry and help residents address their challenges, make informed decisions, and regain financial stability.</p>
Scope and Objectives	<p>The aim of Coventry Independent Advice Service (CIAS) is to provide free, confidential advice and support to Coventry residents on critical social welfare issues. The focus will be on helping individuals and families to access their entitlements to benefits, resolve problem debt, and manage their financial situations more effectively. The support of the VCMA funding will help secure their community-based advice services, ensuring they are accessible and responsive to the needs of residents. The work will include working collaboratively with statutory and community organisations faced by Coventry’s most vulnerable citizens.</p> <p>Advice will be delivered in priority neighbourhoods defined by the Indices of Deprivation³. 28 Coventry neighbourhoods are within the 10% most deprived in England and these include significant parts of the wards of Foleshill, Henley Green, Wood End, Willenhall, Tile Hill and Hillfields. CIAS already have a presence in these areas, and base their outreach advice services in Family Hubs, Community Centres, and libraries within those communities.</p> <p>CIAS will enhance their service delivery by integrating early intervention strategies, which address problems before they escalate. This proactive approach saves time, resources, and stress for clients and public services alike. Additionally, they aim to expand their digital and in-person advice channels, ensuring that all residents, regardless of their circumstances, can access timely and effective support. By working with legal specialists, they ensure that individuals receive expert guidance when their cases require more specialised intervention.</p> <p>The primary beneficiaries of the service will be individuals and families in Coventry who are experiencing financial hardship, struggling with debt, or facing difficulties in accessing welfare benefits. These include people who may not be aware of their entitlements or who are dealing with complex and stressful situations, such as benefit disputes or legal challenges.</p> <p>Vulnerable groups, including those on low incomes, the elderly, those from minority ethnic backgrounds, and people with disabilities, will benefit significantly from the tailored support. The charity also works closely with</p>

² [Financial vulnerability across the UK - Fair4All Finance](#)

³ [Index of Multiple Deprivation \(IMD\) | CDRC Data](#)

	<p>early help providers and local agencies to ensure that residents receive the help they need as early as possible, preventing the escalation of their issues. By empowering people with the right tools and information, this project will ensure they can take control of their financial futures.</p> <p>The project will have a transformative impact on the lives of Coventry residents. By helping people to secure the financial support they are entitled to and by providing solutions to manage debt, it will enhance their financial stability and reduce the stress associated with financial hardship. This, in turn, will have a positive effect on their mental and physical well-being, empowering them to lead more secure and fulfilling lives.</p> <p><u>Updated February 2026</u></p> <p>The costs for the Coventry Independent Advice Service (CIAS) project have been updated to reflect two key developments. Firstly, additional investment is required to provide enhanced training for advisors, ensuring they are fully equipped to meet the increasingly complex needs of service users. Secondly, due to the strong success and growing demand for the service, further funding is necessary to support higher number of residents accessing advice casework support. These updates have enabled the project to delivery high quality face to face accessible support to vulnerable individuals across Coventry.</p>
<p>Why the Project is Being Funded Through the VCMA</p>	<p>Cadent believes that this project meets all of the VCMA company specific eligibility criteria:</p> <p>A. The project is forecasted to have a positive social return on investment (SROI): <i>The project will offer advice and assistance to residents in Coventry allowing them to maximise their household income and claim their full entitlement of means tested benefits. Cadent has an appreciation of the social value generated through funding income maximisation work and more detail of the projects positive SROI can be found in the relevant section below.</i></p> <p>B. The project will either:</p> <p><i>i. Provide support to consumers in vulnerable situations and relate to energy safeguarding, or,</i> <i>ii. Provide awareness on the dangers of CO, or,</i> <i>iii. Reduce the risk of harm caused by CO The project will provide support to consumers in vulnerable situations and relate to energy safeguarding by offering clients that access a mobile food pantry to Helping Hands' free, specialist income maximisation advice.</i></p> <p>C. Have defined outcomes and the associated actions to achieve these: <i>This project has clearly defined outcomes and success criteria, and the associated actions to meet them. Further information on the project's outcomes, associated actions, and success criteria can be found in the relevant section below.</i></p> <p>D. Go beyond activities that are funded through other price control mechanism(s) or required through licence obligations, and: <i>Cadent believes that this project goes outside of activities funded through other price control mechanisms, due to the nature of service being offered and the method through which customers are being engaged.</i></p>

	<p>E. Not be delivered through other external funding sources directly accessed by a GDN, including through other government (national, devolved, or local) funding. <i>This project will be solely funded through Cadent's VCMA and will not access external funding sources.</i></p>
<p>Evidence of Stakeholder/Customer Support</p>	<p>CIAS is a well-established charity dedicated to providing free, impartial, and confidential advice to residents across Coventry. Specialising in welfare benefits, debt management, and financial support, CIAS plays a vital role in helping individuals and families navigate complex systems and secure the assistance they need to improve their financial stability and well-being. The need for their work is particularly acute in Coventry, where many residents face financial hardship, fuel poverty, and rising living costs. Defined by the Indices of Deprivation there are 28 Coventry neighbourhoods within the 10% most deprived in England, and with some of the city's most vulnerable populations struggling to access support or understand their entitlements, CIAS bridges this gap by offering expert guidance. Their work is critical in alleviating inequality, reducing poverty, and fostering resilience in the community.</p> <p>CIAS reported in the period 01st April 2022 until 31st March 2023 that they helped over 2,270 individuals and families, with 11,079 items of work completed on behalf of clients and over £3.5 million financial gains for those individuals and families⁴. Although the need has and will continue to grow the charity has recently been faced with the challenge of Coventry City Council's decision to withdraw their charitable grant, leaving the charity unable to offer a general advice service for Coventry residents at present. The partnership with Cadent will allow them to pick up their advice service and continue to bring trusted advice and support to residents.</p>
<p>Information Required</p>	<p>Description</p>
<p>Outcomes, Associated Actions and Success Criteria</p>	<p><u>Project Outcomes</u></p> <p>This project will aim to achieve the following outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased access to advice services: More residents will receive timely support with debt and benefits. • Improved financial stability: Clients will be better equipped to manage their finances and secure their entitled benefits. • Empower community: Volunteers will develop valuable skills, contributing to the local support network and fostering a sense of community resilience. • Reduced pressure on existing services: Expanding capacity will ease the burden on already overstretched services. <p><u>Success Criteria</u></p> <p>The success of the project will be measure by meeting the below criteria over 12-months:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of advice services via outreach in priority neighbourhoods • 600 unique individuals directly supported (advice and casework for debt and benefit support) • 200 individuals given general information provision, signposting and referral to other specialist services.

⁴ [Our impact – Coventry Independent Advice Service](#)

	<p><u>Updated February 2026</u></p> <p><u>Success Criteria</u></p> <p>The updated funding will be measured through two main areas of enhanced delivery:</p> <p>Advisor training to deliver more tailored support Additional investment will ensure that all advisors receive enhanced training so they can better respond to the increasingly complex needs of service users, as highlighted in the updated scope and objectives. Success will be measured by advisors increased ability to deliver more tailored energy efficiency guidance, building on existing commitment to provide residents with information to help manage their financial situations more effectively.</p> <p>Increase in quality and consistency of advice Funding additional advice capacity to meet growing demand Over and above the original target of direct support to residents and continuing to serve core delivery metrics for the service A broader reach across Coventry's most deprived communities, reinforcing delivery in the 28 neighbourhoods within the top 10% most deprived.</p> <p>The enhanced training and expanded capacity will directly support delivery against the projects stated outcomes, including:</p> <p>Increased access to advice services Improved financial stability for service users Reduced pressure on existing overstretched advice systems</p>
<p>Project Partners and Third Parties Involved</p>	<p>Coventry Independent Advice Service (CIAS)</p>
<p>Potential for New Learning</p>	<p>A partnership between Cadent and CIAS, utilising VCMA funding, offers significant potential for learning and innovation in supporting vulnerable customers in Coventry. This collaboration can provide insights into effective ways of addressing fuel poverty, financial hardship, and energy inefficiency by combining Cadent's expertise in energy services with CIAS's deep understanding of local needs and experience in delivery targeted advice. It also presents an opportunity to evaluate the impact of tailored interventions, such as assisting residents in accessing grants, and managing household finances. Key learnings could include identifying best practices for engaging hard-to-reach groups, assessing the scalability of integrated support services, and refining methods for measuring social and environmental outcomes. This partnership can also shed light on how collaborative approaches can enhance trust, empower communities, and deliver sustainable solutions for vulnerable households.</p> <p><u>Updated February 2026</u></p> <p>The additional funding provides valuable opportunities for new learning by enabling all advisors to receive enhanced training and by expanding the service to support a higher number of users. Through this investment, the project will gain deeper insight into how tailored, specialist advice, particularly around energy efficiency and debt management can improve outcomes for residents with increasingly complex needs. Expanding advisor capacity will also generate learning on how greater throughput and broader community reach influence service quality, engagement and the overall effectiveness of early intervention support. Collectively, this will help refine best practise models, strengthen delivery approaches and inform how future advice services can be scaled sustainably to support vulnerable households.</p>

Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations, including NPV

Scale of VCMA Project

Cadent will invest £94,640.00 in partnership with CIAS. The project will be delivered from 01 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 and is forecasted to reach around 800 individuals.

SROI Calculations

- 600 individuals will receive direct advice and casework on debt and benefits.
- 200 individuals will be signposted to other specialist services.
- 800 individuals will receive information on Energy Efficiency,
- 800 individuals will receive information on Carbon Monoxide Awareness
- 800 individuals will receive information on Priority Services Register with a view of 80 people signing up.

GDN Rulebook

Latest Version Date: 27-09-2024



Load Project:

Project information:		Results:	
Name:	CIAS	Cost (discounted):	£90,385.33
WACC:	4.97%	Customer volume:	2280
Year of assessment:	2025	GPV:	£4,866,821.15
Start year of benefits:	2025	NPV:	£4,776,435.82
End year of benefits:	2030	SROI:	£52.85
Attribution:	0.00%		

Non-standardised activity inputs:

Cost (discounted):	
GPV:	

Total Investment = £94,640.00

Five-year gross present value = £4,866,821.15

One-year gross present value = £973,364.23

Five-year net value = £4,776,435.82

One-year net value = £955,287.16

SROI = £52.85

Updated February 2026

Cadent will invest an additional £90,000.00 in partnership with CIAS, bringing the total investment up to £187,200.00

- Advisor Training
- Additional service users for in-depth income management

	<div data-bbox="470 241 1468 698" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Load Project: <input type="text" value="GDN - CIAS"/> <input type="button" value="Load"/></p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Project information:</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Results:</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>i</i> Name: CIAS</td> <td><i>i</i> Cost (discounted): £178,784.16</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>i</i> WACC: 4.97%</td> <td><i>i</i> Customer volume: 2400</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>i</i> Year of assessment: 2025</td> <td><i>i</i> GPV: £6,469,748.57</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>i</i> Start year of benefits: 2025</td> <td><i>i</i> NPV: £6,290,964.41</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>i</i> End year of benefits: 2030</td> <td><i>i</i> SROI: £35.19</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>i</i> Attribution: 0.00%</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <table border="0" style="width: 100%; margin-top: 10px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Non-standardised activity inputs:</td> <td style="width: 50%;"><input type="button" value="Calculate"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>i</i> Cost (discounted):</td> <td><input type="button" value="Save"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>i</i> GPV:</td> <td><input type="button" value="Clear"/></td> </tr> </table> </div> <p>Total Investment = £18,200.00</p> <p>Five-year gross present value = £6,469,748.57 One-year gross present value = £1,293,936.91</p> <p>Five-year net value = £6,290,964.41 One-year net value = £1,258,192.88</p> <p>SROI = £35.19</p>	Project information:	Results:	<i>i</i> Name: CIAS	<i>i</i> Cost (discounted): £178,784.16	<i>i</i> WACC: 4.97%	<i>i</i> Customer volume: 2400	<i>i</i> Year of assessment: 2025	<i>i</i> GPV: £6,469,748.57	<i>i</i> Start year of benefits: 2025	<i>i</i> NPV: £6,290,964.41	<i>i</i> End year of benefits: 2030	<i>i</i> SROI: £35.19	<i>i</i> Attribution: 0.00%		Non-standardised activity inputs:	<input type="button" value="Calculate"/>	<i>i</i> Cost (discounted):	<input type="button" value="Save"/>	<i>i</i> GPV:	<input type="button" value="Clear"/>
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VCMA Project Start and End Date	1 st March 2025 – 31 st March 2026																				
Geographical Area	The project will be delivered in Cadent’s West Midlands Region.																				
Internal governance and project management evidence	<p>Cadent were introduced to CIAS when the funding grant from Coventry City Council was cut in October 2024. Since then, we have worked collaboratively on a designing the partnership to ensure that it aligns with the delivery our vulnerability strategy and the VCMA governance criteria.</p> <p>The SROI for this 12-month project has been calculated using information that has been provided by CIAS, as set out in the project outcomes of this document.</p> <p>We have based the SROI on those figures which has generated a five-year forecast SROI of £52.85 using the GDN Rulebook.</p> <p>Cadent and CIAS will meet quarterly to review outcomes, share bet practise and enable the project to grow from strength to strength, ensuring all customers are being supported and we address any issues that may arise.</p>																				

**Gas Network Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)
Governance Document - PEA Control Table**

In order to ensure that a VCMA project is registered in accordance with the Ofgem VCMA governance document (incl. project eligibility assessment), the below table should be completed as part of the project registration process.	
Stage 1: Sustainability and Social Purpose Team PEA Peer Review	
Date Immediate Team Peer Review Completed: 31/01/2025 25/03/2026	Review Completed By: Gemma Norton Emma Turnbull
Stage 2: Sustainability and Social Purpose Team Management Review	
Date Management Review Completed: 31/01/2025 25/03/2026	Review Completed By: Gurvinder Dosanjh Kate Clarke
Step 3: Head of Customer Vulnerability Social Programmes Sign-Off: Phil Burrows	
Head of Customer Vulnerability Social Programmes Sign-Off Date: 01/02/2025, 25/03/2026	
Step 4: Upload PEA Document to the Website & Notification Email Sent to Ofgem (vcma@ofgem.gov.uk)	
Date that PEA Document Uploaded to the Website: February 2025 and March 2026	
Date that Notification Email Sent to Ofgem: February 2025 and March 2026	