

Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)

Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA)

Brandwood Community Centre - Centre for Warmth

Edward Allard - Social Programmes Manager
September 2022

Updated October 2024 (Will Allard)
Updated March 2026 (Emma Stead)



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 forecasted positive Social Return on Investment (SROI), including for the gas consumers funding the VCMA project;	Yes
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; 	Yes
c) Have defined outcomes and the associated actions to achieve these;	Yes
d) Go beyond activities that are funded through other price control mechanism(s) or required through licence obligations; and	Yes
e) Not be delivered through other external funding sources directly accessed by a GDN, including through other government (national, devolved or local) funding.	Yes
Section 2 - Eligibility criteria for company specific essential gas appliance servicing, repair and replacement projects	
In order to qualify as a VCMA project, unsafe pipework and essential gas appliance servicing, repair or replacement must meet the following criteria:	
a) A GDN has to isolate and condemn unsafe pipework or an essential gas appliance following a supply interruption or as part of its emergency service role;	Not Applicable
b) The household cannot afford to service, repair or replace the unsafe pipework or essential gas appliance; and;	Not Applicable
c) Sufficient funding is not available from other sources (including national, devolved or local government funding) to fund the unsafe pipework or essential gas appliance servicing, repair or replacement.	Not Applicable
Section 3 - Eligibility criteria for collaborative VCMA projects	
In order 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;	Not Applicable
b) Have the potential to benefit consumers on the participating networks; and	Not Applicable
c) Involve two, or more, gas distribution companies.	Not Applicable

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

Information Required	Description
Project Title	Centre For Warmth - Brandwood Community Centre
Funding GDN(s)	Cadent company-specific project – West Midlands Network
New/ Updated	Updated October 2024 Updated March 2026
Role of GDN(s) *For Collaborative VCMA Projects only	Not applicable - Cadent company-specific project
Date of PEA Submission	4 th October 2022 Updated October 2024 Updated March 2026
VCMA Project Contact Name, email and Number	Name: Phil Burrows Title: Head of Customer Vulnerability Social Programme Delivery Email: Phil.m.burrows@cadentgas.com Number: 07773 545451
Total Cost (£k)	Centre Costs: £201,580.00 Project Management Costs: £4,391.15 <u>Updated October 2024 – additional costs</u> Centre costs: £201,553.34 Slow cookers: £2,784.00 Leaflets: £1,763.64 Project Management cost 4%: £8,244.04 Total £214,345.02 <u>Updated March 2026 – Additional funding</u> Centre costs: £68,000.00 Project Management cost: £2,720.00 Total: £70,720.00
Total VCMA Funding Required (£k)	£205,971.15 GBP <u>Updated October 2024</u> £420,316.17 <u>Updated March 2026</u> £491,036.17
Problem(s)	The 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) analysis evidences the scale of deprivation in Birmingham and across the city. IMD is based on seven categories including income, health, employment and living environment. There are 350 of Birmingham’s 639 neighbourhoods are among the 20% most deprived areas in the UK. At a more local level, Birmingham also contains a high proportion of the highest of deprived LSOAs.

	<p>Brandwood is one of the most at-risk communities, with a significant number of households living in fuel poverty and deprivation</p> <p>Fuel poverty can have many adverse effects on household's health, including excess winter deaths at the extremity.</p> <p>A 2022 ¹Entitled to statistics report that an estimated £15bn of benefits goes unclaimed by approximately 7,000,000 families. This equates to an average of £2,142 per household, a figure which would make a significant difference in helping families to meet rises in the cost of living and fuel.</p> <p><u>Updated October 2024</u></p> <p>The ongoing success of the project has sparked considerable growth and heightened interest within the community.</p> <p>This surge in engagement presents a pivotal opportunity to expand the current initiative, enabling the Brandwood Community Centre to adeptly manage a greater number of appointments and services.</p> <p>Over the past two years, Brandwood have observed a significant increase in the number of individuals seeking assistance to navigate the challenges of everyday life. The demand for crucial benefits and energy efficiency advice has escalated, and it is essential that we respond with urgency and determination. The Brandwood Centre has cultivated a robust rapport and trust with residents and embraces its role as a 'First Step' venue. This means that individuals are inclined to rely on the Centre for much needed support, aid and advice.</p> <p>Soaring living costs have compelled many households to make heart-wrenching choices, particularly impacting low-income families who are now at an even greater risk of hardship. It has become all too common for adults to forgo meals to ensure their children are nourished or to leave the heating off in their homes, even when the cold is biting. This persistent state of poverty carries severe social repercussions, leading to family breakdowns, diminishing social and cultural engagement, and alarming increases in crime and victimization. These pressing challenges cannot be disregarded any longer; taking decisive action is not only necessary but imperative. Thus, Brandwood are best positioned to continue to help tackle these issues and address the needs of the community.</p> <p><u>Updated March 2026</u></p> <p>The Brandwood community continues to face significant financial hardship, with many households struggling to navigate an increasingly complex economic landscape. As the cost of living continues to rise, residents are finding it harder to manage day-to-day expenses, understand their entitlements, and make informed decisions about their household finances. These pressures have created a growing demand for dedicated appointments, where individuals can receive personalised support, structured guidance, and practical advice tailored to their specific financial circumstances.</p>
<p>Scope and Objectives</p>	<p>Project Scope</p>

¹ <https://www.entitledto.co.uk/>

Cadent will provide Brandwood Community Centre with £201,580 of VCMA funding to deliver a two-year project.

This two-year 2022-2024 agreement replicates the current Centres For Warmth model, whereby specialist benefits advisors are employed using the VCMA to provide vulnerable households with essential financial support. As well as employing specialist benefits advisors, the project will include a community outreach worker.

Alongside specialist benefits advice, the centre will also offer essential information on carbon monoxide (and natural gas) safety and the priority services register.

Project Objectives

Cadent will measure the success of the Centre for Warmth - Brandwood Community Centre against the achievement of the following objectives:

- The centre will support around 1150 clients per annum in identifying all benefits that they are eligible for and will also be guided through the claims process.
- The centre will support around 2000 clients per annum with advice on carbon monoxide (and natural gas) safety, registration to the priority services register and signposting Brandwood Centre For Warmth's wider services.
- The centre will support around 1150 people per annum on energy efficiency advice.

Updated June 2024

Cadent will provide Brandwood Community Centre with an additional £214,345.02 for an 18-month extension. The funding will enable the centre to provide additional services as listed below.

Project Objectives

- Deliver PSR advice to 1,000 individuals.
- Sign-up 1,000 individuals to the PSR.
- Provide energy efficiency advice to 1,725 individuals via in-depth one-to-one or group conversations.
- Provide 690 individuals with income maximisation services.
- Provide 100 slow cookers at dedicated events and as individual needs emerge.
- Provide one-to-one carbon monoxide awareness conversations to 3,000 individuals.
- Distribute 1,000 carbon monoxide alarms.
- 345 individuals will attend the centre and have a conversation with others, alleviating loneliness, and isolation.

Updated March 2026

Cadent will provide Brandwood Community Centre with an additional £68,000.00 to support the growth of the project and support additional service users for the remainder of the project.

- Deliver an additional 300 income maximisation conversations to individuals.

<p>Why the Project is Being Funded Through the VCMA</p>	<p>Cadent believe that this project meets all the required VCMA eligibility criteria.</p> <p>a. The project is forecasted to have a positive SROI. Please see the relevant section for more information.</p> <p><i>We believe this project has the deliverables necessary to create a positive social return on investment - see the below section for more details.</i></p> <p>b. The project will either:</p> <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. <p><i>The project will provide support to customers living in vulnerable situations through energy efficiency advice/income maximisation. The project will also offer customers education on the dangers of CO and issue audible alarms to particularly at-risk households.</i></p> <p>c. The project has defined outcomes and the associated actions to achieve them.</p> <p><i>This project has clearly defined outcomes and associated outcomes, the meeting of which will quantify success. Further information on the project's outcomes and associated actions can be found in the relevant section below.</i></p> <p>d. The project goes beyond the activities funded through other price control mechanisms or required by licence obligations.</p> <p><i>The method of delivering support to customers living in venerable situations is innovative, as it uses partnerships with key community stakeholders. This will allow Cadent to distribute essential advice to one of a customer group that has been historically difficult to engage.</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.</p> <p><i>This project will be delivered solely through Cadent's VCMA funding.</i></p>
<p>Evidence of Stakeholder/Customer Support</p>	<p>The Brandwood Community Centre - Centre For Warmth project aims to offer customers in vulnerable situations support, particularly those impacted by the cost-of-living crisis. We operated five Centres for Warmth in 2021/22, generating incredible support from local communities and, on average generating financial savings of c.£2,000 per household supported.</p> <p>Cadent and Britain Thinks conducted research on customer's attitudes towards energy in 2022. The research focussed on measuring customer's attitudes towards energy and understanding any shifts in perception since the development of Cadent's RIIO-GD2 business plans.</p>

The research evidenced that customers are making changes to household spend and energy. For example, the Cadent study found similarities with the ONS February 2022 survey where 79% of customers said that their cost of living had increased due to price rises in energy and food.

Additionally, the same survey found that 26% of customers had needed to use their savings to pay for household essentials such as energy and food.

This VCMA project is aimed at helping Birmingham households who are finding the need to eat into savings or reduce energy and food consumption because of the cost-of-living crisis. The project will offer essential support through helping households to maximise their income and use their energy more efficiently.

Cadent also conducted customer and stakeholder feedback on its 2021-2022 VCMA delivery. Cadent asked participants for feedback on its 4 key VCMA project areas: Identifying customers' needs and joining up support services, tackling affordability and fuel poverty, protecting our customers from the dangers of CO, and Going beyond to never leave a customer vulnerable without gas.

81% of customers and 78% of stakeholders supported Cadent continuing its funding of community-based projects such as Centres For Warmth and Warm Hubs. For instance, one customer participant (aged >70) commented:

"Some interaction is vital for people on their own - giving them a safe and warm place to meet up is vital for many peoples mental health"

Updated October 2024

Cadent conducted a national survey in 2024. The aim of the research was to assess customer/stakeholder opinion on Cadent's allocation of VCMA spend and gain insight on where we should direct VCMA funding in the future. We have captured some of the key evidence below:

- Four out of five people are willing to pay £2.70 per year to fund each of the interventions that Cadent fund using the VCMA funding.
- 82% of people were willing to pay the extra £2.70 to help people in vulnerable situations with free repairs and replacements.
- 75% of people feel that they understand their gas beyond the overall price. With only two out of five fully understanding it.
- There is exceptionally low trust associated with energy companies, thus projects like Centres for Warmth can increase positive reputation.

This project focuses on tackling fuel poverty by offering energy/income advice to at-risk households.

Quote from the centre manager:

"Cadent's support is not merely financial aid; it is a linchpin in addressing the multifaceted issues stemming from the cost-of-living crisis. This includes meeting the demand for support, leveraging our unique standing as a trusted community centre, and upholding our dedication to providing free services to those in

	<p>need. The financial assistance from Cadent is required for our centre to fulfil its mission of aiding individuals and families in navigating the financial complexities arising from the escalating cost of living.”</p> <p><u>Updated March 2026</u></p> <p>People are increasingly seeking one-to-one sessions because they need clear, reliable help to understand benefits, energy costs, budgeting, and ways to maximise their income. Many residents lack confidence when dealing with official processes or financial paperwork, and without dedicated time with a specialist advisor, they may miss out on vital financial support.</p> <p>This rise in need reinforces the vital role of the Centre as a trusted first point of contact, ensuring that individuals and families can access expert help, understand their options, and take meaningful steps toward improving their financial wellbeing.</p>
<p>Information Required</p>	<p>Description</p>
<p>Outcomes, Associated Actions and Success Criteria</p>	<p>The partnership with Brandwood Community Centre will form part of Cadent's wider Centres for Warmth network. The Centre for Warmth project model relies on the provision of VCMA funding, materials and resource to a community centre located in an area of high deprivation, fuel poverty, and carbon monoxide risk. The increased levels of funding, resource and materials enable the community centre to ramp up its existing support for customers in vulnerable situations.</p> <p><u>Project Outcomes</u></p> <p>The Brandwood Community Centre - Centre for Warmth Project aims to achieve the following outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centre clients report increased levels of household income. • Clients will report reduced levels of anxiety in fearing a utility outage. • Clients will report an increased awareness on the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO) and have a reduced risk of harm caused by CO. <p><u>Associated Actions</u></p> <p>Cadent Brandwood Community Centre will implement the following associated actions to deliver the project's outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients will report increased levels of household income through working with the centre's specialist benefits advisors. The specialist benefits advisors will support households to identify and access previously unclaimed benefits. • Clients will report reduced levels of anxiety in fearing a utility outage through be assisted to register to the Priority Services Register (PSR). Centre staff will all receive an

awareness on the PSR and will help eligible households through the registration process.

- Clients will report an increased awareness on the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO) and have a reduced risk of harm caused by CO. This will be achieved through the centre's staff providing CO awareness conversations and distributing CO alarms to the most at risk households.

Success Criteria

The success of the project will be measured against meeting the below criteria (each year):

- Around 1150 clients will receive specialist advice on identifying and accessing previously unclaimed benefits.
- Around 1150 clients will receive help and support on energy efficiency.
- Around 2000 clients will receive an awareness conversation on the dangers of CO.
- Around 2000 households will improve their awareness of the PSR. Approximately 800 eligible households will also be supported to register.

Updated October 2024

The Centre for Warmth project will be executed in partnership with the Brandwood Community Centre, with a clear objective to support and educate an additional 3,000 individuals over an 18-month period.

Thanks to the success of the initial two-year project, Cadent has extended the funding. The original project outcomes will remain in place, but the associated actions and success criteria are now revised. Please review the following sections for these important updates.

Associated Actions

The additional funding will allow the Centre to extend full-time contracts for both a community outreach worker and a benefits and debt advisor. It will also enable the continuation of a part-time contract for a receptionist/administration worker for an additional 19 months, ensuring that the centre can keep delivering the "Centre for Warmth" project.

Furthermore, this funding will facilitate the coordination and delivery of "Warmer Night" sessions during the winter months. These sessions will extend the Centre's opening hours to assist families struggling to afford energy and food. Participants will be able to attend the Centre one or two days per week for three hours, where they will receive a hot, healthy meal and education on carbon monoxide, CO alarms, the PSR and income maximisation.

This initiative also serves as an opportunity to combat loneliness and isolation by fostering strong relationships within the community, allowing individuals to address their issues in a safe and supportive environment.

	<p><u>Success Criteria</u></p> <p>The success of the extension will be measured against achieving the additional objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver PSR advice to 1,000 individuals. • Sign-up 1,000 individuals to the PSR. • Provide energy efficiency advice to 1,725 individuals via in-depth one-to-one or group conversations. • Provide 690 individuals with income maximisation services. • Provide 100 slow cookers at dedicated events and as individual needs emerge. • Provide one-to-one carbon monoxide awareness conversations to 3,000 individuals. • Distribute 1,000 carbon monoxide alarms. • 345 individuals will attend the centre and have a conversation with others, alleviating loneliness, and isolation. • Will host Warmer Night sessions from October through till March. <p>These figures are included in the SROI calculation below.</p> <p><u>Updated March 2026</u></p> <p>The success of the project will be measured by delivering an additional 300 income maximisation conversations, providing tailored one-to-one support to individuals who require help understanding and accessing the financial assistance available to them.</p> <p>These 300 additional appointments are in addition to the 1,840 income maximisation conversations already committed within the previous funding phases, strengthening the Centre's capacity to meet rising community need.</p>
<p>Project Partners and Third Parties Involved</p>	<p>Cadent will work in partnership with Brandwood Community Centre to deliver the project.</p>
<p>Potential for New Learning</p>	<p>Cadent expects this VCMA project of offer several opportunities for new learning.</p> <p>Clients to access unclaimed benefits</p> <p>Several other Centre for Warmth projects support households to access unclaimed benefits, and the learning from the Brandwood Community Centre project will be disseminated across the Centre For Warmth programme.</p> <p>The national landscape is quite different at the time of project registration, versus the start of RIIO-GD2. There have been significant rises in the cost of living and fuel in 2022, and it is important that Cadent's support through the VCMA meets these changes. This Centre for Warmth agreement will offer Cadent insight on the new challenges faced by communities in 2022. This new learning will be circulated across Cadent's entire VCMA programme beyond just Centre for Warmth.</p> <p><u>Updated October 2024</u></p>

	<p>This crucial support will empower the Centre to effectively combat fuel and food insecurity, ensure that everyone receives the benefits they deserve, and offer tailored assistance to individuals in need.</p> <p><u>Updated March 2026</u></p> <p>The additional funding will enable the centre to deliver vital financial appointments, ensuring that residents can access the tailored support they need.</p>
<p>Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations</p>	<p><u>Scale of VCMA Project</u></p> <p>Cadent will invest £205,971.15 in partnership with Brandwood Community Centre over 2 years.</p> <p>This VCMA project will be delivered across a two-year partnership with Brandwood Community Centre. The project will support approximately up to 2,000 households with a range of services.</p> <p>The project will benefit households in close proximity to the community centre, and those in the wider area through the specialist benefits advisors and community outreach workers.</p> <p><u>SROI Calculations (for 2 years)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment = £205,971.15 • 1150 per year families supported with benefits and debt advice –£3,949,353. • 1150 per year families given advice on energy efficiency – £1,610,323. • 4000 families advised on CO £41,892 • 1600 PSR sign-ups £172,668 <p>5-year Social Return on Investment = £5,774,236.00</p> <p>5-year net Present Value = £5,568,264.85</p> <p><u>Supporting households to maximise their income</u></p> <p>Cadent worked with SIA Partners to evaluate the average 5-year gross present value of supporting households to maximise their income. SIA Partner's based their analysis on the "actual" data from a 3-month project between Cadent and NEA, and historic data from NEA over the past 3 years.</p> <p>SIA Partners calculated an average 5-year gross present value of supporting households to maximise their income of £1,717.11.</p> <p><u>Educating customers on the dangers of carbon monoxide</u></p> <p>Cadent also employed SIA Partners to evaluate the forecasted social return on investment of several RIIO-GD2 business plan elements. These elements included CO education, CO alarm distribution and the repair/replacement of gas appliances.</p> <p>SIA Partners pointed to a number of factors that influenced the social value generated by educating customers on the dangers of carbon monoxide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reduction in A&E visits linked to CO.

- A reduction in long term hospitalisations linked to CO.
- A reduction in deaths caused by CO.
- A reduction in time of work due to injury caused by CO.
- A reduction in ambulance call outs linked to CO.

SIA Partners calculated the average 5-year gross present value of a CO-educational conversation to be £8.73 - this is based on a 1-2-1 conversation with an 80% retention rate.

Supporting households to register to the Priority Services Register

Cadent worked with SIA Partners to evaluate the average 5-year gross present value of supporting households to register to the PSR. SIA Partner's based their analysis on the DNO proxy bank value for an avoided stress management course.

SIA Partners evaluated an average 5-year gross present value of £143.89 for a single PSR registration.

Updated October 2024

Cadent will invest a further £214,345.02 in partnership with the Brandwood Community Centre.

The full duration of the project including the original and extension of the project, Cadent will invest £420,316.17. over 42 months.

- 1,840 individuals will receive income maximisation advice = £3,159,482.40
- 2,875 individuals will receive energy efficiency advice = £1,057,338.75
- 6,160 individuals will receive advice on CO = £53,776.80
- 1,976 individuals will be registered on the PSR = £284,326.64
- 215 individuals will receive a slow cooker and advice on cooking healthier meals = £50,830.30
- 708 individuals will alleviate loneliness = £1,486,800.00

Five-year gross present value = £6,092,554.89

One-year gross present value = £1,345,950.98

Five-year net present value = £5,672,238.72

One-year net present value = £1,227,160.98

SROI Ratio: £1:13

Updated March 2026

Cadent will invest a further £70,720.00 of VCMA funding in partnership with the Brandwood Community Centre.

The full duration of the project including the original, extension of the project and additional funding, Cadent will invest £491,036.17. over 42 months.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,140 individuals will receive income maximisation advice = £3,674,615.40 • 2,875 individuals will receive energy efficiency advice = £1,057,338.75 • 6,160 individuals will receive advice on CO = £53,776.80 • 1,976 individuals will be registered on the PSR = £284,326.64 • 215 individuals will receive a slow cooker and advice on cooking healthier meals = £50,830.30 • 708 individuals will alleviate loneliness = £1,486,800.00 <p>Five-year gross present value = £6,607,687.89 One-year gross present value = £1,448,977.58</p> <p>Five-year net present value = £6,116,651.72 One-year net present value = £1,330,187.58</p> <p>SROI Ratio: £1:12</p>
<p>VCMA Project Start and End Date</p>	<p>Project start date: 15/10/2022 Project end date: 15/10/2024</p> <p><u>Updated October 2024</u> End Date: 31st March 2026</p> <p><u>Updated March 2026</u> End Date: 31st of March 2026</p>
<p>Geographical Area</p>	<p>The project will be delivered in Cadent's West Midlands network and will provide benefit to customers located in the Brandwood area of Birmingham.</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 & Social Purpose Team PEA Peer Review	
Date Immediate Team Peer Review Completed: 03/10/22 25/03/25 24/03/2026	Review Completed By: Gemma Norton Nicola Campbell
Stage 2 Sustainability & Social Purpose Team Management Review	
Date Management Review Completed:03/10/22 21/03/25 25/03/2026	Review Completed By: Guv Dosanjh Emma Turnbull
Step 3: Head of Customer Vulnerability Social Programmes Sign-Off: Phil Burrows Phil Burrows	
Head of Customer Vulnerability Social Programmes Sign-Off Date: 25/03/25 25/03/2026, 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: March 2025 and March 2026	
Date that Notification Email Sent to Ofgem: March 2025 and March 2026	