

Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)

Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA)

Make Life Better -LIFTA (Life income Financial Technology Assistant)

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November 2025



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.	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 license 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	
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).	
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	Make Life Better - LIFTA
Funding GDN(s)	Cadent
New / Updated (indicate as appropriate)	New
Role of GDN(s) *For Collaborative VCMA Projects only	N/A
Date of PEA Submission	November 2025
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)	Partner costs: £45,000.00 Project management costs (4%): £1,800.00 Total Cost: £46,800.00
Total VCMA Funding Required (£k)	£46,800.00
Scope and Objectives	<u>Problem</u>

	<p>Billions of pounds in benefits go unclaimed each year due to lack of awareness, complex application processes, and stigma. Policy in Practice estimates that £24.1 billion in benefits and social tariffs were unclaimed in 2024-2025 (see Policy in Practice). Make Life Better (MLB) is addressing this by streamlining benefit applications with artificial intelligence. The Life Income Finance Technology Assistant (LIFTA) automates form-filling, capturing essential information through advisor-individual conversations and reducing errors. LIFTA aims to cut Personal Independence Payment (PIP) application times from hours to minutes, making access easier for those who need it.</p> <p>This minimises mistakes and gathers evidence needed for the claim whilst reducing time to complete the application from hours to minutes.</p> <p>Existing automated systems can populate forms with simple data; LIFTA captures the “why” — the reasoning and evidence that secure successful awards such as PIP. By linking digital insight to expert caseworkers, it converts indicative data into verified outcomes.</p> <p><u>Scope and Objectives</u></p> <p>To facilitate the development of LIFTA, the funding provided by Cadent's VCMA will be essential. This financial support will furnish the requisite resources for MLB to enhance the technology, incorporate user feedback, and ensure its effectiveness in meeting the needs of beneficiaries. Through this initiative, we aim to not only expedite access to financial support but also cultivate a more supportive environment for individuals navigating the benefits system.</p> <p>This technology will enable MLB to complete more applications in the same time frame therefore helping more individuals access benefits.</p>
<p>Why the Project is Being Funded Through the VCMA</p>	<p>We believe that the project meets all the Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance eligibility criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Have a positive, or a forecasted positive, Social Return on Investment (SROI) including for the gas consumers funding the VCMA Project: <p><i>The project delivers a positive forecasted social return on investment. This is based on achieving the target reach for income maximisation by utilising the LIFTA tool.</i></p> 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 of the dangers of CO, or, iii. Reduce the risk of harm caused by CO. <p><i>The project delivers outcomes that supports customers in vulnerable situations who are struggling with the cost of living and cannot afford to pay for energy through lack of income.</i></p> <p>Have defined outcomes and the associated actions to achieve these:</p> <p><i>Cadent and Make Life Better will enter a partnership that will contain project objectives and outcomes. Further details of these can be found in the 'Outcomes, Associated Actions and Success Criteria' section.</i></p>

	<p>c. Go beyond activities that are funded through other price control mechanism(s) or required through license obligations, and,</p> <p><i>This method of delivering support to customers in vulnerable situations falls outside of Cadent's BAU activities and other license conditions.</i></p> <p>d. 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 solely delivered through Cadent's VCMA funding.</i></p>
<p>Evidence of Stakeholder/Customer Support</p>	<p>Cadent has previously conducted and continues to obtain extensive stakeholder and customer engagement on its RIIO-GD2 business plans and subsequent VCMA delivery. For instance, we regularly seek to obtain the feedback of stakeholders such as Citizens Advice and National Energy Action (NEA) to understand the needs of customers in vulnerable situations.</p> <p>These regular conversations allow Cadent to gain feedback on the initiatives we are, or should be supporting, and ensure that our VCMA-funded projects are in the best interests of our customers.</p> <p>Stakeholders have provided consistent feedback on the need for energy networks to focus their funding on supporting households most impacted by the cost-of-living crisis.</p> <p>This project takes this feedback into account by creating a partnership with a trusted organisation, positioned in an area with levels of deprivation and fuel poverty significantly higher than the national average.</p> <p>In terms of customer engagement, we asked customers for their views on which of the below statements best described their health and financial situation in 2022-2023, when compared to 2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My current household's health or financial situation is worse off compared to 2021. • My current household's health or financial situation is the same compared to 2021. • My current household's health or financial situation is better off compared to 2021. <p>60% of participants responded that their households' health or financial situation was worse off this year compared to 2021 levels.</p>
<p>Information Required</p>	<p>Description</p>
<p>Outcomes, Associated Actions and Success Criteria</p>	<p>MLB is partnering with its developer to enhance LIFTA, thereby empowering users to more efficiently apply for additional benefits. VCMA funding will be exclusively allocated to this initiative, facilitating the processing of a greater number of individual applications. The PIP</p>

Analyzer, now available as a prototype, streamlines the collection and organisation of information required for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) forms by converting medical evidence and adviser notes into a format appropriate for submission to the DWP. This advancement enables Welfare Benefit Specialists to complete tasks in minutes rather than hours. Building on this progress, the next phase involves further development of the tool into LIFTA— the Life Income Financial Technology Assistant. LIFTA will serve as a secure, AI-driven benefits engine capable of managing multiple welfare entitlements while upholding the pivotal role of human advisers in client engagement.

- Over the next 4 months LIFTA will be progressed to the next level.
- Focusing on hard-to-reach and digitally excluded individuals.
- 350 individuals will have support to access previously unclaimed benefits, grants and tariffs.
- 350 individuals will feel less stressed relating to family life as they are supported to claim what they are entitled to.
- 350 individuals will feel the wellbeing benefit of avoided impact of financial distress.
- Many customers are visiting GPs to discuss cost of living problems² -17 (5%) individuals will avoid a GP visit

Project outcomes

The VCMA project will be delivered in partnership with Make Life Better and aims to support individuals with Income maximisation advice across a 4-month period.

This project will:

- Allow the development of the LIFTA tool.
- Assist more individuals with income maximisation support due to this speeding up applications.
- Eventually allow Cadent and MLB to offer LIFTA to other partners across our portfolio and the other GDNs.

Associated actions

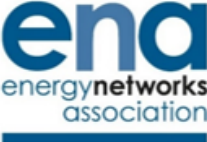
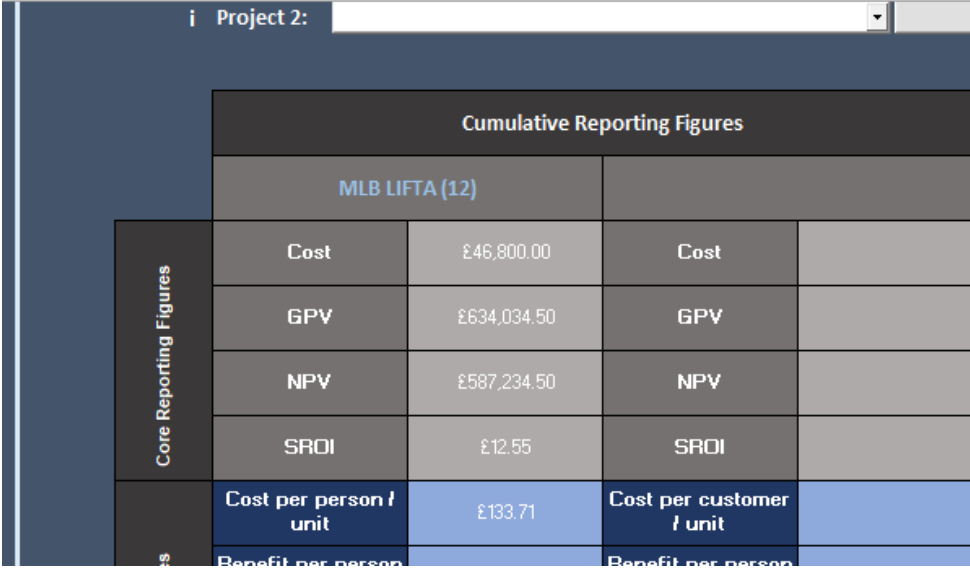
The partnership with MLB to progress LIFTA will utilise VCMA funding to support vulnerable individuals with benefit applications:

- At least 350 individuals will benefit from help from MLB who will use LIFTA to successfully apply for benefits for them until award.
- The development of the tool will mean that more benefits will be added to the range.
- Eventually we can offer this to partners and GDNs.
- More people will be awarded benefits first time rather than going to appeal as the correct documents will be submitted with the claim.

Success Criteria

- Continuous development will enable more benefits to be added to the tool, resulting in more claims awarded faster than they are currently, due to not needing to resubmit as LIFTA checks evidence and the answers to questions, and aligns this to ensure success.
- 350 individuals will be assisted with benefit claims until March.
350 individuals will feel less stressed.

² [Seven in ten GPs seeing 'worrying' rise in patients with cost of living-related problems, says College survey](#)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 350 individuals will feel less likely to visit GPs regarding benefits and the cost-of-living effects on health, therefore easing the burden on the NHS. <p>The project deliverables have been forecasted using the ENA GDN Rulebook and it is forecast to achieve a positive SROI.</p>																																													
Project Partners and Third Parties Involved	Cadent and MLB																																													
Potential for New Learning	<p>This project has the ability to revolutionise the benefits application when fully developed.</p> <p>LIFTA blends AI automation with human empathy to deliver faster, fairer and more consistent welfare support. It cuts adviser time while keeping the human connection that ensures trust, accuracy and successful outcomes — doing more for less without losing quality.</p> <p>Existing automated systems can populate forms with simple data; LIFTA captures the “why” — the reasoning and evidence that secure successful awards such as PIP. By linking digital insight to expert caseworkers, it converts indicative data into verified outcomes.</p> <p>This will mean more applications can be completed in the same time frame and as the evidence is checked more claims should be awarded first time, cutting out waiting times for individuals to receive benefits.</p> <p>Once fully complete Cadent aim to share this with the industry and partners.</p>																																													
Scale of VCMA Project and SROI Calculations, including NPV	<p>Total Investment=£46,800.00 One-year gross value = £191,518.00 Five-year gross value = £634,034.50 One-year SROI = £3.09 Five-year SROI = £12.55</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;">  <div style="text-align: right;"> <p>Social Value Framework Model</p> <p>Latest Version Date: 27-09-2024</p> </div> </div>  <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2"></th> <th colspan="4">Cumulative Reporting Figures</th> </tr> <tr> <th colspan="2"></th> <th colspan="2">MLB LIFTA (12)</th> <th colspan="2"></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td rowspan="4" style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Core Reporting Figures</td> <td>Cost</td> <td>£46,800.00</td> <td>Cost</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>GPV</td> <td>£634,034.50</td> <td>GPV</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>NPV</td> <td>£587,234.50</td> <td>NPV</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>SROI</td> <td>£12.55</td> <td>SROI</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Cost per person / unit</td> <td>£133.71</td> <td>Cost per customer / unit</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Benefit per person</td> <td></td> <td>Benefit per person</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Cumulative Reporting Figures						MLB LIFTA (12)				Core Reporting Figures	Cost	£46,800.00	Cost			GPV	£634,034.50	GPV			NPV	£587,234.50	NPV			SROI	£12.55	SROI				Cost per person / unit	£133.71	Cost per customer / unit				Benefit per person		Benefit per person		
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	<p>The following activities have been forecasted using the ENA calculator as below:</p> <p>350 individuals experiencing the wellbeing benefit of avoiding the impact of financial distress. 50 individuals experiencing the wellbeing benefit of the avoidance of stress of family life. 61 this equates to 5% of the total 350 individuals avoiding the need to visit their GP regarding the cost-of-living effects on health.</p>
VCMA Project Start and End Date	<p>Start Date: 15th December 2025 End Date: 31st March 2026</p>
Geographical Area	<p>The project will be delivered across Cadent networks.</p>
Internal governance and project management evidence	<p>Cadent carried out a review of MLB's proposal taking into account the demographics, target community and the indices of deprivation.</p> <p>This was then reviewed by the social programme manager and signed off by the Head of vulnerability.</p> <p>The project will be managed by holding a monthly project management meeting between Cadent and MLB to discuss progress, issues and deliverables.</p>

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

<p>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.</p>	
<p>Stage 1: Sustainability and Social Purpose Team PEA Peer Review</p>	
<p>Date Immediate Team Peer Review Completed: 08/12/2025</p>	<p>Review Completed By: Ellen Cox</p>
<p>Stage 2: Sustainability and Social Purpose Team Management Review</p>	
<p>Date Management Review Completed: 19/12/2025</p>	<p>Review Completed By: Emma Turnbull</p>
<p>Step 3: Director of Sustainability & Social Purpose Sign-Off: Phil Burrows</p>	
<p>Director of Sustainability and Social Purpose Sign-Off Date: March 2026</p>	
<p>Step 4: Upload PEA Document to the Website & Notification Email Sent to Ofgem (vcma@ofgem.gov.uk)</p>	
<p>Date that PEA Document Uploaded to the Website: March 2026</p>	
<p>Date that Notification Email Sent to Ofgem: March 2026</p>	

