

EVERY CUSTOMER MATTERS

Our strategy and
performance

Updated June 2025



Wessex Water
YTL GROUP



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Foreword

Water bills have risen significantly this year to fund essential investment to deliver a highly ambitious set of outcomes, including tackling pollution, enhancing the water environment, and ensuring there is enough water to cater for everyone's needs over the long term.

This has added increased pressure on customers at a time when they are still feeling the impact of the cost-of-living crisis.

Although bill rises are unwelcome for all, our concern has been greatest for the hardship felt by customers who need extra help.

Water must continue to be affordable for all so our goal is to eradicate water poverty across our region - no one will spend more than 5% of their disposable income on water by 2030. We will do this by increasing the number of customers receiving tailored financial support through discounted tariffs or other affordability schemes.

Some of our customers need extra help in other ways. That could be how we communicate with them or the help we offer during events such as supply interruptions, for instance providing bottled water. We continue to tailor our day-to-day service to those customers through Priority Services.

We want all customers to know there is extra help available to them whatever their need. This strategy sets out a number of initiatives designed to raise awareness of the support we offer and make it as easy and quick as possible to access our services. We will auto-enrol customers onto discounted tariffs or Priority Services where we can by using data to identify those in need or sharing information with other organisations.

Working in partnership with others allows us to meet our goals. We are always looking at ways to work better and more effectively with our existing wide range of partners and develop new relationships. Their insight is invaluable to us as we continue to shape our support schemes to meet the changing needs of our customers.

In February 2024 Ofwat, our economic regulator, introduced a new principles-based customer focused condition into water companies' operating licences. Two of those principles relate specifically to services for customers who need extra help and are underpinned by extensive supporting guidance. We have carefully judged ourselves against the expectations in this guidance and believe we are compliant.

We have also engaged further with our customers, partners, and stakeholders to get their views on the services we provide and this strategy as a whole. They were very positive.

This document, Every Customer Matters, was first published in 2018. It sets out how our service is accessible and inclusive for all. We update it each year and this time we have incorporated any suggestions made by customers, partners and stakeholders in our latest research and added information to evidence compliance with the new licence condition. We hope you enjoy learning about our ethos and values, the work we've done in this important area to date and our plans to widen support in the future up to 2030.



We want all customers to know there is extra help available to them whatever their need.

Tim Gardam

Independent Non-executive Director

Foreword

If ever a comprehensive vulnerability and affordability strategy has been needed, it is now. We are, therefore, pleased that Wessex Water continues to build on its exemplary work in this area - through extensive consultation with stakeholders who represent customers in need of extra help and research with customers themselves, and with a goal of being in the vanguard of work with households whose circumstances make them vulnerable to macro-economic changes that are beyond their control.

Life has not been easy for many people with vulnerabilities and others who live on low incomes. The cost-of-living crisis came soon after the height of the Covid-19 pandemic and hit their household budgets hard. This has been followed by large increases in water bills that coincided with increases in other key household bills, including energy and council tax payments, putting further strain on their budgets. Their financial futures are also likely to be affected by the fall-out from the world-wide tariff increases.

We also know that there are many customers who are disproportionately affected by problems with their water supply or need extra help with communications and how they get in touch with Wessex Water. This strategy lays out the many ways they can work with customers and partners to make sure that extra support is in place where and when it's needed.

The Vulnerability Advisory Panel has worked closely with Wessex Water as it has developed this strategy. Moreover, at the end of 2024, the Panel undertook a deep dive of the social tariffs and other support provided to customers with vulnerabilities and/or low incomes and concluded that the cover is comprehensive. The challenge in the coming years will be to ensure that those in need are identified and their needs met in full. We will continue to work closely with Wessex Water to maximise the chances of success.



The Vulnerability Advisory Panel has worked closely with Wessex Water as it has developed this strategy.

Elaine Kempson

Suzanne Wigmore

Co-chairs of the Vulnerability Advisory Panel

May 2025

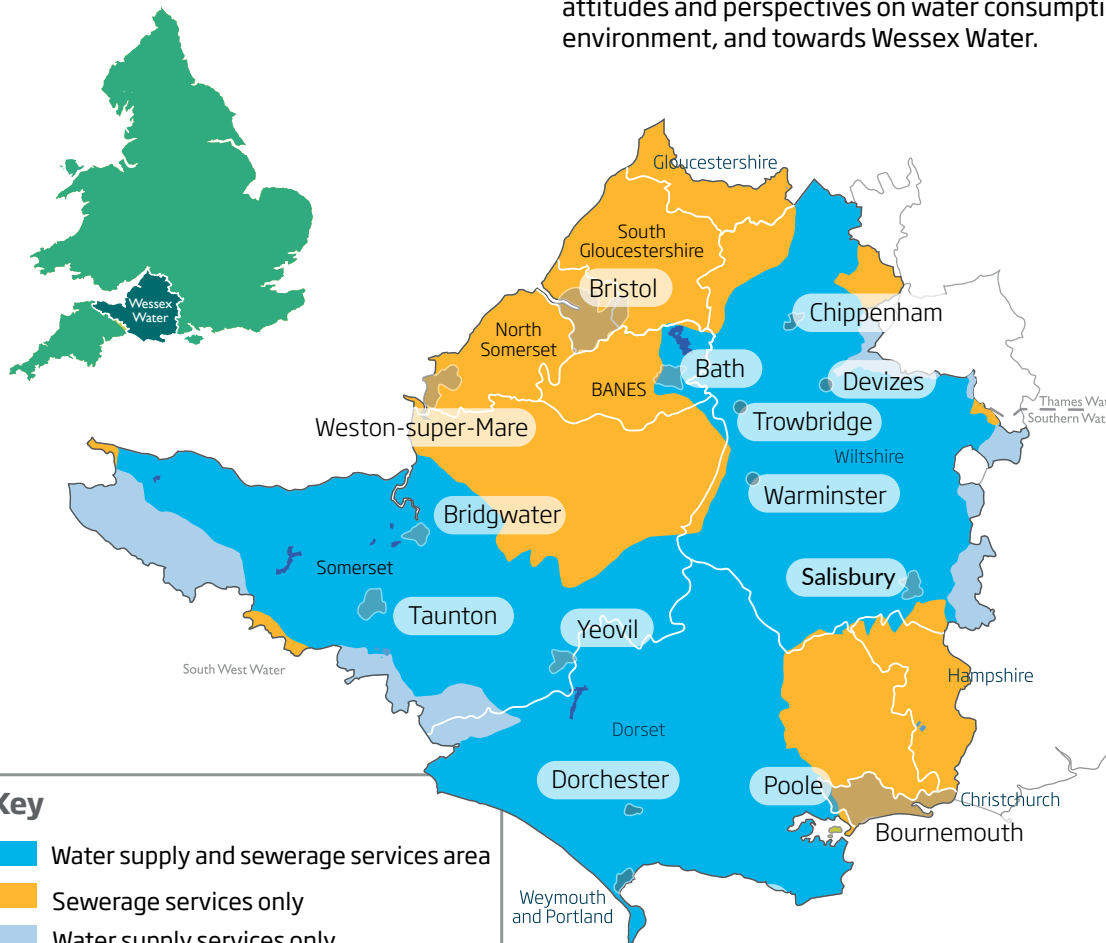
Who we are

We are a regional water and sewerage company serving 2.9 million customers across the south west of England, jointly billing with Bristol Water in the north of our region.

Our region includes the areas of Dorset, Somerset and Bristol as well as most of Wiltshire and parts of Gloucestershire and Hampshire.

Our mission is to provide our customers and communities with excellent, reliable and affordable services, while also delivering a better environment for nature and people.

We represent a diverse range of customers in a wide variety of geographical locations who engage differently with us in their daily life. This is shaped by a range of attitudes and perspectives on water consumption, the environment, and towards Wessex Water.



Wessex Water's vulnerability strategy shows that they have considered the challenges that can be faced by those in circumstances that could make them vulnerable, have listened to customer views via research, and it highlights their intention to have an inclusive service for all of their customers.

Of particular focus right now is the financial pressure people are facing. This year water bills have seen a record increase to enable much needed investment in the water industry. Along with other bills also rising, more and more people will feel the pressure on their finances. It is great to see that Wessex Water continues to develop their social tariff offerings and continue to explore ways in which to reach those who require the support.

Wessex Water utilises their Vulnerability Advisory Panel well, gaining insights from professionals who have a wealth of experience in working with those who are vulnerable, or are temporarily experiencing vulnerability. This could include financial difficulties, physical disabilities or mental ill health. Wessex Water consults the panel on their strategy, their suite of financial support schemes, the effectiveness of their additional offers of support (Priority Services Register), and the delivery of all of these services.

As part of CCW's engagement with Wessex Water we have also been working with them in the development of their vulnerability strategy providing feedback and challenge. We look forward to continuing working with the company as it implements its plans to ensure that they deliver improved outcomes for customers.

Louise Mills, Policy Manager, CCW

Who we are (continued)

Our ethos - every customer matters

People don't like to think of themselves as in need of extra help, and most think the term could never apply to them. The reality is that anyone can need extra help at any time.

That is why the starting point for our strategy is not to define or categorise vulnerability, but to build a service on the basis that every customer matters, always.

We are proud, not just of the future plans outlined in this strategy, but also of our existing, substantial record in customer service and our wealth of experience across the spectrum of activities designed to support customers who need extra help.

Throughout this document, you will not only read about our plans but also, and just as importantly, about our record - of customer care, of data sharing, of partnerships, of going the extra mile.

This experience supports and informs our strategy to 2030 and beyond. It combines with a commitment to innovation and communication that ensures our support programmes and initiatives will reach more people than ever before.

The values that inform our strategy for customers who need extra help

- We are committed to delivering customer care and service tailored to the individual.
- Our service is inclusive and accessible to all.
- We give staff the tools, training, confidence, and awareness to deal with complex situations.
- We work closely with other customer support organisations across our region.

And in terms of financial vulnerability specifically, we:

- believe that water use should not be rationed by a customer's ability to pay - no one should be in water poverty
- encourage engagement with customers who are financially vulnerable
- build relationships of mutual trust with debt advice agencies/partners
- support a holistic approach to debt management
- offer tailored solutions with flexibility to meet an individual's financial circumstances
- prefer a sustainable and affordable level of payment of whatever size.

Customer focused licence condition

In February 2024 Ofwat, the economic regulator for water, introduced a new principles-based customer focused condition into water companies' operating licences. Two of the overarching principles relate specifically to services for customers who need extra help, financial or non-financial.

Both principles are underpinned by extensive supporting guidance, known as Service for all and Paying Fair.

We have carefully judged ourselves against the many expectations in this guidance and are pleased that we are compliant.

We have included a summary of our compliance with Service for all as an appendix to this strategy and provided extensive information directly to Ofwat on Paying fair which has been published on Ofwat's website.

We have also mapped our initiatives on pages 32 to 45 against the individual expectations in the supporting guidance.

In April 2025, Ofwat introduced new standards they expect water companies to achieve when using their Priority Services Register (PSR) to support customers who need extra help. The standards focus on five key areas, definitions, needs and services, reach, data checking and registration. This document outlines our approach to meeting these standards and demonstrates how we deliver support through our PSR across each of the key focus areas.

Stakeholder Vulnerability Advisory Panel (VAP)

Our VAP was set up in 2013 and consist of experts including representation from various stakeholders such as consumer bodies, government departments and CCW.

VAP support, advise and challenge our Vulnerability Strategy to ensure we are fulfilling our commitment to reach all our customers and, more recently, comply with the relevant principles of the customer focused licence condition.

We constantly review our strategy and monitor the delivery and effectiveness of our commitments and initiatives. We report regularly to the panel and seek their input to ensure we are focusing on the right areas and if any new initiatives need to be considered.

We have two independent chair, Suzanne Wigmore, CEO Wiltshire Citizens Advice, and Professor Elaine Kempson, Professor Emeritus, University of Bristol. VAP is a sub group of our customer challenge panel (CCG). Our chairs also sit on the CCG and take views to that forum.

Our current members include:

Rob Sandells	StepChange Business Development Manager
Louise Mills	Policy Manager CCW
Daniel Cadisch	CEO Central Dorset Citizens Advice
David Inman	Corporate Director Rural Services Network
Helen Webb	National external partnerships manager - Christians Against Poverty
Alex Newton	Money Advice Trust Partnership manager
Sarah Cardy	CEO Age UK Wiltshire
Karen Taylor	Department of Work & Pensions Operations Manager Dorset, Wilts, Hants & IOW
Michael Paul	Disability Rights UK Head of Advice & Information
Nikki Johnson	National Grid Electricity Distribution Social Obligations Manager
Laura Jones	Scope Partnership Account Manager
Andy Wood	Scope Utilities Partnerships Lead
Ellie Gaddes	Independent Age Senior Policy Manager



What 'every customer matters' means in practice

Going the extra mile

When it comes to customer service it's often the little things that make a difference. We only have one opportunity to get it right. GEM - going the extra mile - sums up our approach to customer service and putting 'customers at the heart'. We encourage staff to put themselves in the customer's shoes and give them the confidence to achieve the best outcome for that customer.

Our staff are trained to quickly recognise when a customer may need extra help and react in a way that provides immediate support. We reviewed our training needs in 2024-25 and are launching new GEM training which includes a core section on spotting when a customer needs extra help, and how to tailor our service to suit and guide staff on directing customers to external resources for expert support. The new

training also covers resilience, helping our staff handle challenging situations or upsetting conversations with customers based on their circumstances.

Our call centre and collections teams have also been through specialist training with the Money Advice Trust to better spot and understand the signs of financial difficulty. They work to find the best solution for the customer depending on their financial circumstances to prevent them from falling into debt, and to make their bills affordable whether that is by the installation of a free water meter, flexible payment plan, low-rate tariff and/or our Restart debt repayment scheme.

Showing compassion. Being caring and sensitive. Thinking beyond just the situation in hand. Feeling empowered to do whatever it takes. Tailoring our service to the individual. These qualities are vital to the delivery of GEM, and vital to our ability to support customers who need extra help.

Accessible for everyone

We are committed to achieving the highest levels of customer satisfaction, through a customer's communication channel of choice, building trust and loyalty at the same time.

We're focusing more and more on the quality of interactions with customers, and we've extended our choice of channels. If, for example, a customer has suffered a bereavement, they might not feel like talking to someone on the phone and instead want a more 'faceless' but equally friendly interaction such as 'Live Chat' or using our online form.

In the event of an emergency, we can contact customers via text message.

We also signpost to notification services which limit the distress of notifying numerous organisations when a loved one passes away.

Whatever the chosen method, our customer care team holds the hand of the customer through their journey.

Through Priority Services, we provide additional methods of communication, which include:

- Relay UK text service
- home visits
- nominated carer/family member/ friend to talk to us or receive correspondence on a customer's behalf
- an interpreter through language line or SignLive
- bills and other communication in the customer's preferred choice such as Braille, large print, CD (on request), coloured paper (on request) or translated into another language.

We are also committed to making our website accessible. We've used Recite Me to allow our customers to customise the site in a way that works for them. Any YouTube video we produce has a Closed Caption (CC) option for subtitles.

We want our services to be accessible to all. As we are not prescriptive about how customers should contact us, we don't exclude anyone.



What 'every customer matters' means in practice (continued)

Looking for signs of extra needs and requirements

We improve the skills and knowledge of our telephone and field staff through specialist training, often developed and delivered by our advice partners. This includes Dementia Friends, mental health awareness, spotting the signs of financial difficulty and vulnerability, bereavement training, suicide awareness and deaf awareness. Our suite of vulnerability learning is available to all staff across the company, and our suite of vulnerability training is mandatory for all customer facing staff.

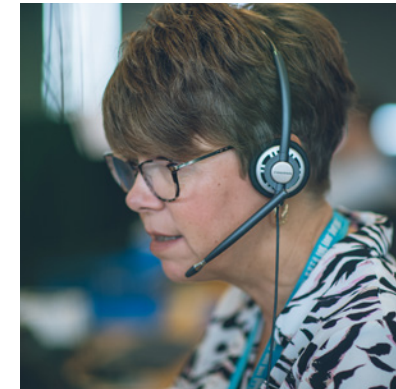
We focus on the quality of the interaction rather than speed of response. This ensures our staff have time to spend with customers who have more complex needs. Training ensures our staff are sensitive, compassionate, and confident when it comes to dealing with difficult and often complex situations, but crucially they can spot signs when things aren't right and encourage disclosure from customers. They are trained in the use of non-judgemental listening and appropriate language. We take every opportunity to promote the support we offer as part of Priority Services and encourage sign up,

offering many ways for customers to do so including online, over the phone or face-to-face with our field teams. Working with third parties, such as National Grid, also means the customer only needs to tell us once.

Our Vulnerability Experts cover all areas of the business to act as ambassadors for our vulnerability strategy and share key information throughout their teams. We provide specialist training for them to support their colleagues, share best practice and look at ways in which we can improve knowledge around the business.

We invite experts and people with lived experience to give their insight into the challenges they face and how we can support our customers in similar situations. This has included Age UK, Kidney Care UK, an Aphasia charity (living with speech difficulties), Friends against scams, Stopping Loan Sharks, Cruse and Helen Pettifer, vulnerability expert.

Our annual Vulnerability Awareness week will continue to highlight issues which may affect not only our customers but our staff too and how we can support them in complex situations.



The Vulnerability Advisory Panel has worked closely with Wessex Water as it has developed this strategy.

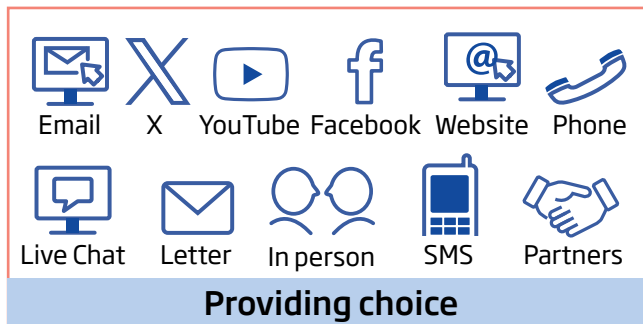


**Positive outcomes
for our customers**

Accessible

Inclusive

Tailored care/service



**Our people: Caring and sensitive
Perceptive • Flexible
Empowered • Skilled
Confident • Go the extra mile**

What 'every customer matters' means in practice (continued)

Providing an inclusive service

Some customers need a much more tailored service from us to meet their needs. To get this right we comply with best practice guidance from:

- the industry regulator, Ofwat
- the customer watchdog, CCW
- UK Regulators Network
- Office of the Public Guardian
- other industry regulators such as OFGEM, OFCOM, FCA
- Citizens Advice
- companies providing excellent customer service outside our industry.

We hold the British Standard for Inclusive Service Provision and the Customer Service Excellence award to ensure we continue to provide the very best care for our customers.

We have engaged with and received endorsement from 53 organisations (local and national) who have reviewed the service we promise to offer now, and in the future, and allowed us to use their logos as a stamp of approval.

We have also received the Gold Award for three years running from Bristol Dementia Action Alliance as a proud dementia aware organisation, and are the first water company to obtain Partner status from Stop Loan Sharks.

Designing new and testing existing services with customers in mind

Stakeholders and partners, who represent customers who need extra help, have played a key role in the development of this strategy. They have helped co-create the services we offer to their specific client groups on Priority Services, evolve our financial support schemes, identify ways to raise awareness and increase take-up of our support and improve the effectiveness of our partnerships.

We have also engaged directly with customers through specific research and co-creation projects. For example, we've asked customers for ways we can improve Priority Services, to help us simplify the application process for our support schemes and understand their views on social tariffs and the level they are prepared to pay to support bill discounts for those on lower incomes.

More recently we have asked customers for their views on this strategy as a whole, including satisfaction with the support we're offering.

A summary of the specific research that has informed this strategy is in appendix I.

We also:

- understand the satisfaction of customers on Priority Services, and drive continuous improvement through a combination of day-to-day tailored feedback surveys and detailed customer journey mapping, adopting different customer personas. See case study on page 54. We were delighted to have been quoted as best practice by CCW and Ofwat for this element of our complaints action plan
- look at the differences in the likelihood to complain or escalate a complaint between customers on Priority Services and others

- regularly seek the views of our expert Vulnerability Advisory Panel and more than 300 partners to continuously improve our offering for customers on Priority Services or in financial difficulty (see more information on our partners on pages 46-49).
- continue to comply with the British Standard for Inclusive Service Provision (BS18477). It has been one of our performance commitments since 2015
- regularly provide customer complaint satisfaction data to CCW, the consumer watchdog, so they can track our progress.

We plan to:

- undertake specific research with Priority Services customers, or specialist organisations representing them, to understand their expectations for complaint management and how these might differ. We will make changes, where necessary, to improve the journey for complainants
- better evaluate the impact on customer satisfaction when implementing new initiatives for those on Priority Services
- continue to share and explore best practice in the way we support customers who need extra help through our expert Vulnerability Advisory Panel, our partners, wider stakeholders including CCW, and companies inside and outside the sector
- set up a lived experience panel when creating new services or testing existing services and communications.

Our ambitious commitments – to 2025

In 2018, when this strategy was first published, 86% of our customers told us that we ‘treat them fairly’ and 65% said that we ‘care about our customers’. In our business plan for 2020-2025 we set out these ambitious commitments and aims.

Our commitments to 2025	Our performance - March 2025
More than double the number of customers on our social tariffs from 35,000 to 86,000. One in 15 households will receive a lower bill	71,040 customers on social tariffs 76,642 customers on wider TAP (tailored assistance programme) schemes
Receive at least 2,300 successful applications for Tailored Affordability Plans each year from our debt advice partners	2,935 successful applications*
Increase the numbers on our Priority Services Register from 8,500 in 2018 to over 90,000 by April 2025	152,838 households registered*
Contact customers on our Priority Services Register every two years to check their needs and details are up to date	Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2025 we attempted to contact 97.3% of customers on our register. The target was 90%. In the same period our actual contact was 64.5% against our target of 35%*
Continue to hold the British Standard for Inclusive Service (BS 18477)	Maintained*
Continue to hold the Customer Service Excellence award	Maintained* We comply with all 57 elements of the standard and have 25 compliance pluses up from 3 the previous year. Compliance plus means we exceeded the requirements of the standard against an element, demonstrated exceptional practice, or can be used as an exemplar for others within or beyond our sector.
Continue to fund a number of local community projects across our region through the Wessex Water Foundation aimed at improving access to services and building financial capability	Achieved*
Our aims to 2025	Our performance - March 2025
Double awareness of our affordability support (tailored assistance programme) from 18% to 36%	Research from our Image tracker survey shows that 43% of bill payers are aware
Double awareness of Priority Services from 16% to 32%	Research from our Image tracker survey shows that 44% of bill payers are aware
Continue to hold the Louder than Words charter mark from the Royal Institute for the Deaf (RNID)	RNID no longer have their Louder than Words charter mark. However, we now have regular engagement with them and follow their best practice
Continue to hold the Keep me Posted best practice mark	Maintained
Continue to be a dementia friendly utility and for all current customer facing staff to be Dementia Friends	2,280 staff have become Dementia Friends
Comply with the Dementia Friendly Utilities Guide, in which we feature	Comply

***Monitoring success** We review this strategy regularly by monitoring the delivery of our commitments and initiatives and reporting our progress. More information can be found in our [Annual Performance Report and Annual review](#), which can be found on our website. Our stakeholder VAP review our progress twice a year and sign off our performance and strategy. We will provide an update to our executive team twice a year from 2025.

Understanding the level of help required

We are better equipped than ever to identify, reach, and support customers who need extra help. The number of customers requiring assistance continues to grow, increasing the pressure on our services. The value of our existing experience and proven programmes cannot be overstated.

Financial factors

Impacted by national and international factors, the cost-of-living crisis continues to affect everyone's lives, placing enormous pressure on household finances.

Additionally, the significant but essential investment we have planned between 2025 and 2030 to deliver a highly ambitious set of outcomes, including tackling pollution, enhancing the water environment, and ensuring there is enough water to cater for everyone's needs over the long term, will add increased pressure as water bills regrettably rise.

The 11th wave of the Financial Fairness Tracker ([Financial Fairness Tracker: January 2025](#)), commissioned by the abrdn Financial Fairness Trust, reveals a slight decline in the financial well-being of UK households since May 2024, with a decrease in those feeling 'financially secure' and an increase in 'exposed' households. Older adults have seen a notable drop in financial security, though they remain more secure than working-age individuals.

Despite some improvements in financial difficulty indicators, such as fewer people struggling to pay for essentials, there has been a slight decline in financial resilience. Households with children, especially those with three or more children, disabled children, or living in rented homes, continue to face significant financial pressures, with many struggling to afford a healthy diet and living in homes with damp, mould, or condensation issues. Data was collected from nearly 6,000 households in November 2024 and analysed by the University of Bristol's Personal Finance Research Centre.

The charity Scope reports that one in four people in the UK are disabled, and life costs them on average an extra £1,010 per month.

Closing the gap

Water must continue to be affordable for all. Our goal is to eradicate water poverty across our region—no one will spend more than 5% of their disposable income on water by 2030. For those in the most hardship who are least able to pay, we will go even further. At the end of March 2024, we had 76,642 customers on our affordability schemes. We predict that 140,000 will need help with their water bills by 2030.

To measure the levels of water poverty across our region and target our affordability support, we are utilising a water poverty tool developed by CACI. This tool estimates bill-to-income ratios at postcode level for all households in our region where socio-economic data is available to estimate household income.

By matching this data with CACI's Acorn classification, we can better understand the types of households that are likely to be in water poverty – as well as the types of households most likely to be in 'deep' water poverty (and therefore need greatest support). This informs our awareness and engagement programmes for our affordability support.

By continually refreshing and refining the data, we can monitor whether our social tariffs are addressing water poverty across different demographic groups over time.

We are also using the outputs of this tool to make our data matching with the DWP more effective, to accelerate auto-enrolment of customers on to schemes. As the tool also allows us to understand the geographic dispersion of households in water poverty, we can also use the outputs to produce interactive maps to share with our partners, to inform their own awareness campaigns and customer engagement.

Non-financial factors

In 2025, approximately one in four adults in England, which translates to about 25% of the adult population, experience a mental health problem each year. This includes a wide range of conditions such as anxiety, depression, PTSD, and more severe disorders. Also in the UK, the number of people with dementia or memory loss is set to rise to more than one million in 2025. By 2050, the number of people with sight loss is expected to double to over four million. The number of people in the UK over the age of 60 is expected to rise to more than 20 million by 2030. Additionally, 10.6 million people, one in five adults, in the UK are estimated to be unpaid carers. These numbers illustrate the scale of the issues that we face in the years to come.

Closing the gap

By March 2025, we had reached 152,838 households on our Priority Services Register. Customers may need extra help for a variety of reasons, and indeed, some customers who have certain conditions are sufficiently supported by carers or their family and do not want extra help.

Understanding the level of help required (continued)

To better understand demand for Priority Services, we have partnered with the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) to conduct a comprehensive PSR analysis.

CSE carries out similar analysis for energy distributors to help them and Ofgem understand the gap between eligibility and PSR reach.

In December 2024, CSE conducted this analysis providing us with up-to-date estimates of households eligible for PSR and detailed insights into the reach of our PSR services.

Variable	PSR records	Eligibility estimate	PSR reach
Overall *	130,480	615,084	21.2%
Over 65	78,356	419,846	18.7%
Disability	66,352	175,744	37.8%
Child under 5	14,989	119,478	12.5%
No English	690	9,720	7.1%
Partial sight	6,845	24,923	27.5%
Blind	1,422	15,345	9.3%
Hearing impaired	15,611	60,075	26.0%
Dementia	5,620	25,800	21.8%
Mental health	16,301	27,176	60.0%

Note: The “PSR Reach” column shows the percentage of eligible households in each category who are currently registered on the PSR—not the percentage of all households.

Using our March 2025 figure of 152,838 households on the PSR, this equates to a 24.9% reach of eligible households (152,838 out of 615,083).

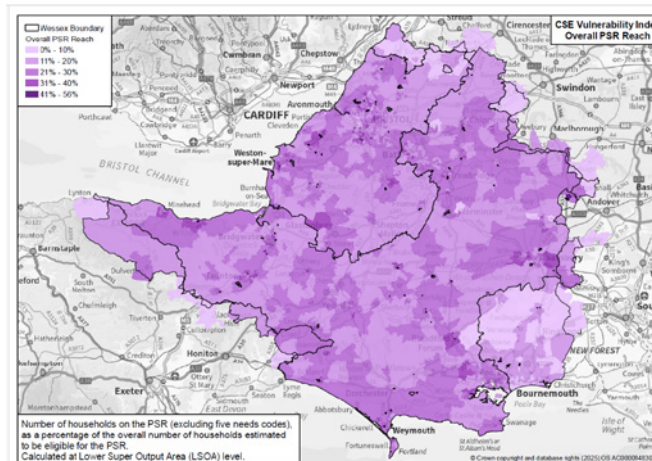
Using Census 2021 data, CSE estimated that 615,083 households in our region are eligible for PSR—this represents 47% of all households.

A large proportion of these customers are eligible solely because they are over the age of 65. When this group is excluded, the number of eligible households drops to 276,460, or 21.2% of all households.

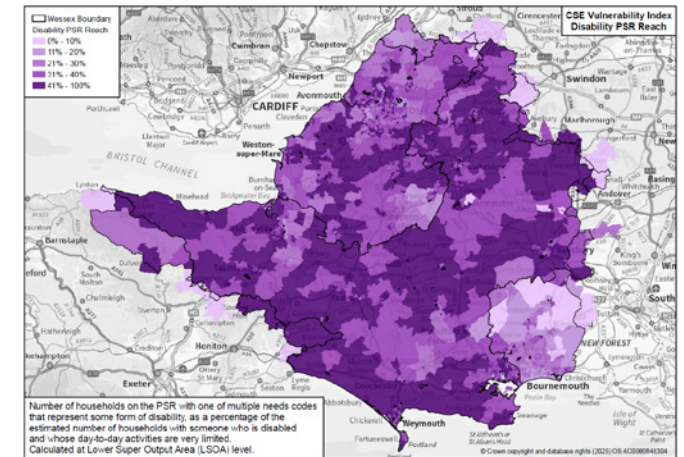
We find that many of our customers of pensionable age see no reason to be added to the Register just because of their age, but it is useful for us to understand the potential range in reach when setting targets.

CSE also provided eligibility estimates for grouped and individual ‘Needs Codes’, using various open datasets. By comparing these with our own PSR data, they calculated both the number of customers registered and the percentage of eligible customers reached—referred to as PSR reach.

We have produced maps to demonstrate our PSR reach and gap. Here are some examples. The first map shows the overall PSR reach for our region.



The second map shows overall PSR reach for disability needs codes.



We are pleased to see that our percentage is higher for those with disability and mental health issues.

We are committed to ensuring that those most at risk receive the support they need. In 2025-26, we will continue our partnership with Kidney Care UK and seek to strengthen relationships with organisations that support individuals who are blind, have heart conditions, or are neurodiverse. These collaborations aim to increase our PSR uptake, enhance staff training, and improve the quality of services we provide.

The analysis helps to identify areas with low PSR reach for targeted campaigns. The detailed geographic breakdowns enable us to track and measure the success of our awareness activities.

We plan to make the data accessible to our partners via PartnerHub to help them raise awareness with customers specific to their service or region.

Our ambitious commitments to 2030

We have set a new target to increase the number of households on the Priority Services Register to around 320,000 by 2030. This would represent:

- 25% of all households in our region, and
- 52% of eligible households, based on CSE's estimate of 615,083 eligible households.

This target strikes a balance between ambition and focus—growing our Register while ensuring those at greatest risk of harm are identified and supported.

Understanding the demographics and vulnerabilities of our customer base enables us to anticipate and respond to future challenges, such as population growth, extreme weather events, and an ageing population.

We set out our proposed approach to tackle water poverty and better support those who need extra help in our [Business Plan for 2025-2030](#).

Working with our Vulnerability Advisory Panel and taking account of customers' views, we have set out some specific commitments and aims for this strategy to 2030.

Our commitments to 2030

Increase the number of customers on our affordability schemes to around 140,000. No one will be in water poverty

Increase the number of households on Priority Services to around 320,000 (25%) by 2030

Attempt to contact 90% customers on our Priority Services Register.
Actually contact 55% customers on our Priority Services Register

Help customers to save water and energy by fitting around 238,000 smart meters and providing water efficiency support

Our aims to 2030

Achieve a score of 90% when we ask Priority Services customers if they are satisfied with our service (We currently track operational contact and use post-event surveys, with billing contact surveys to follow)

Achieve a score of 90% when we ask Priority Services customers if we met all their needs (We currently track operational contact and use post-event surveys, with billing contact surveys to follow).

Continue to fund our debt advice partners and local community projects across our region to build financial capability and increase access to our services

Achieve ISO 22458:2022 Consumer vulnerability

Maintain our Customer Service Excellence award

Increase awareness of Priority Services such as a different communication method or extra support during a supply interruption to over 65%

Increase awareness of affordability support for customers who struggle to afford their water bill to over 65%

Achieve a score of more than 85% when we ask partners if they are satisfied with our service

Increase the number of data shares we have with organisations such as councils

Continue to be a dementia friendly utility with all customer facing staff Dementia Friends

All customer-facing staff to become Friends Against Scams

Adhere to the Keep Me Posted campaign

Attempt to contact customers who we have contact details for on Priority Services who are affected during an incident to check if they need bottled water delivered or any additional support

All customer facing staff to complete vulnerability iLearns

Comply with WCAG 2.2 AA

In addition, we will make it as easy as possible for customers to apply for our services, auto-enrolling them on to support schemes where we can. We will also improve our communications with customers while we resolve their contact and during events, such as a break in the water supply. Our communications with those who need extra help will be more frequent and personalised using a range of channels including calls from our Customer Care Team.

What you can expect from us if you need extra help

Vulnerability comes in many forms, and extra help might be needed for a short or long time. Some customers need extra help when dealing with us day-to-day, during breaks in their water supply or issues with sewerage services. Others need help with their bills, and some need both.

So, we have designed and deliver flexible, tailored additional services to meet the widest possible range of customers' needs now and into the future through Priority Services and our Tailored Assistance Programme (TAP).

Our standard tailored service promises

- Contacting customers to check if they need bottled water delivered during an unplanned break in their water supply.
- Scheduling planned water supply interruptions around the customer's treatment needs.
- Providing wider support during extended water outages or property damage due to water flooding, including engaging third parties and arranging evacuation if needed.
- Supporting customers experiencing sewer flooding.
- Signposting to support services via National Support Network.
- Communicating with customers using their preferred contact method and providing written materials in accessible formats such as Braille, large print, or translated versions. Ensuring all communication is jargon-free and in plain English.
- Offering multiple contact options, including Live Chat, a dedicated language line, sign language translation, and Text Relay.
- Taking additional meter readings and offering free meter relocation if a customer has difficulty accessing or reading their meter.
- Using a knock-and-wait or password service when visiting customers at home.
- Liaising with a nominated contact such as a carer, friend, or family member on the customer's behalf. Encouraging setting up Power of Attorney and providing guidance on our website. [Managing someone else's account](#)
- Providing advice to customers on how to prepare for potential service disruptions.
- Assistance through partners such as NHS and local resilience forums.
- Providing access to low-rate tariffs and support schemes to help reduce bills and manage debt, along with practical advice on water and energy use. Our teams will signpost these schemes whenever possible.

Customers may need one or more of these standard services depending on their specific circumstances.

Some groups of customers might need even more specific help from us. We have used the insight from our stakeholders and partners to illustrate, on the following pages, the extra help we might give to certain customer groups on top of our standard services and actions we will take to best support them. We recognise customers may fall into more than one group.



What you can expect from us if you need extra help (continued)

Hearing impairment/deafness

Deafness, hearing loss or tinnitus affects 18 million people in the UK – that's one in three adults, who are more commonly of the older generation.

We promise to:

- ensure our customer-facing staff have deaf awareness training
- ensure the communications we use during an emergency are tailored for deaf/hearing impaired customers
- ensure our customer help videos are subtitled
- give staff access to sign language apps
- offer to speak to a nominated contact on behalf of the customer
- be aware that customers may have information about themselves within their home to share with us when we visit (perhaps a card by their front door)
- provide, when we are visiting hard of hearing customers who wish to use our password scheme, the means to do so either through a written password or other communication arrangements.



Dementia/cognitive impairment

There are current estimates that around 982,000 people are living with dementia or a cognitive impairment in the UK, but more than a third of people with the condition do not have a diagnosis. The number is expected to rise to 1.4 million by 2040.

We promise to:

- ensure that all customer-facing staff are trained to be a Dementia Friend and have an awareness of dementia
- ensure that all our sites with public access are dementia friendly and have dementia friendly signs
- be aware that customers may have information about themselves within their home to share with us when we visit (perhaps a card by their front door)
- continue as an active partner, supporting local networks and attending relevant best practice sharing events
- take part in the national dementia action awareness week each year
- encourage and support our partners when it comes to best practice in this area
- check understanding with the customer and potentially follow up by giving the information in writing, phone call or a home visit.



We must understand the challenges people with dementia face

Hearing loss affects 18 million people in the UK

What you can expect from us if you need extra help (continued)

Mental health

One in four people will experience a mental health problem of some kind each year. Mental health can affect anyone from any background at any time and ranges from everyday life worries to severe depression.

We promise to:

- work with mental health charities to ensure that our staff are provided with up-to-date training on mental health, non-judgemental listening and use of appropriate language
- recognise when to signpost customers to other organisations
- know the right questions to ask to encourage disclosure and provide support for the customer if required
- continue as an active partner, supporting local networks and attending relevant best practice sharing events
- train staff, through our wellbeing group, to become mental health first aiders to support their colleagues or friends and family
- support national mental health awareness week each year
- Provide training for all customer-facing staff on mental health awareness, including how to recognise signs of distress and how to appropriately signpost customers to relevant support services.



By understanding and recognising mental health problems we can ensure that both staff and customers are better supported



See our case study on page 57

Dialysis

For some types of renal patients, the water and electricity supply is critical to their dialysis treatment. Because unpredictable weather is commonplace in the UK, we urge all kidney patients to act on this to ensure their life is not put at risk.

It is essential that they notify us of their status as a renal patient so we can act quickly in the event of a water supply interruption and other unexpected events.

We promise to:

- call the customer or nominated third-party during a water supply event and keep them updated (including via text) until the supply is fully restored
- deliver free bottled water in emergencies or planned work
- quickly check the quality of our supply after an interruption event to ensure that it is safe to use for dialysis again
- work closely with the NHS to support our customers on dialysis
- work in partnership with Kidney Care UK to reach more customers who may need to be on our Priority Services Register or WaterSure scheme
- work with Kidney Care UK to get better links with home dialysis teams in more hospitals across the region
- aim to check in with customers who have a dialysis needs code on our register so we can ensure we are still supporting them correctly.

What you can expect from us if you need extra help (continued)

Blind or partially sighted

More than two million people are estimated to be living with sight loss in the UK today. This sight loss is severe enough to have a significant impact on their daily lives. It affects people of all ages but especially older people: one in five people aged 75 and one in two aged 90 and over are currently living with sight loss.

There is also a link between sight loss and reduced wellbeing. People with sight loss are three times more likely to suffer from depression.

We promise to:

- provide bills and a selection of our leaflets in large print, or braille
- take the needs of the blind/partially sighted into account when we are working in the street
- ensure that all our sites with public access are accessible for customers with sight loss
- provide accessibility tools on our website so it's accessible for customers with vision impairment and loss.



More than two million people are estimated to be living with sight loss in the UK today

Pensionable age

There are more than 17 million people aged 60 or over in the UK, making up 24% of the population. There are now 3.2 million people aged 80 or over, and almost 600,000 of these are aged 90 or above.

In our region, more than a third of the population are aged 60 and above. Although ageing isn't an illness, some may find later life more challenging.

We promise to:

- consider password schemes when we visit at home, with the option to have a third party present
- offer to redirect bills to a carer or family member or friend, if the customer is in hospital, living in residential care or staying with relatives for a long period
- withdraw the water and/or sewerage charges if an unmetered property is unoccupied but furnished while a customer is in hospital, living in residential care or staying with relatives for a long period
- work with Age UK to provide training for staff on how to support customers of pensionable age.

What you can expect from us if you need extra help (continued)



Physical impairment

Over 18% of the UK population have a limiting long-term illness, impairment, or disability. The most reported impairments are those that affect mobility, lifting or carrying.

We promise to:

- ensure that all our sites with public access are wheelchair-friendly
- work with groups who support our customers affected by the rising cost of living due to their conditions.

We can read the water meter up to four times a year

Developmental conditions

Conditions include, but are not limited to, some autism spectrum conditions, Down's syndrome, cerebral palsy and spina bifida.

This may affect a person's ability to communicate, interact with other people and cope with change and uncertainty.

We promise to:

- offer a range of communication options for our customers - while we have online forms, Live Chat and email, customers can choose the best communication option for them
- if we speak to a customer with a developmental condition on the phone, we will check understanding and offer a follow up email to set out what has been agreed
- ensure our leaflets and other communication methods are jargon-free and written in plain English
- speak in a clear, literal way, avoiding jargon and checking understanding
- plan with the customer what they should do if something goes wrong or if there is an emergency.

Customers can choose the best communication option for them

Unable to communicate in English/ literacy difficulties

We recognise and understand that there are many different languages spoken by customers in our region.

Also 7.1 million people in England can be described as having 'very low literacy skills'.

We promise to:

- provide bills and a selection of our leaflets in a preferred language
- use Google Translate when visiting people in their homes
- ensure our leaflets and other communication methods are jargon-free and in plain English
- work with third party organisations such as Scope to make sure bills are easy to read and understand
- we will check understanding and offer a follow up communication to set out what has been agreed.



What you can expect from us if you need extra help (continued)

Chronic/serious illness

We are here to support our customers who have short and long-term or life limiting illness and understand that this can be a difficult time.

We promise to:

- offer to redirect bills to a carer, family member or friend, if the customer is in hospital, living in residential care or staying with relatives for a long period. We can also withdraw the water and/or sewerage charges if an unmetered property is unoccupied but furnished
- provide help with bills and debt if required
- work with organisations to support customers with life limiting conditions to seek effort-free advice and make it simple to get help with their bills
- encourage the customer to let us know if their circumstances have changed or when we check in with them every two years.



We offer a wide range of contact options for our customers

Speech impairment

Around 2.5 million in the UK have a speech or language difficulty, either due to an illness, disease, or developmental condition, so we understand that not everyone has the ability or confidence to communicate with us over the phone.

We are committed to ensuring we offer a wide range of channels so our customers can contact us easily.

We promise to:

- make our services accessible via many different channels including Live Chat, email, letter, social media and Relay UK text service.

Families with children under five

With babies and young children in the house, being without water can bring a whole new set of challenges, and on a daily basis many need extra help with our services.

We promise to:

- work with organisations who work with families and children to promote our help with bills
- deliver bottled water to those with children under 12 months, where we know
- treat families with children under 12 months as priority one in a water quality incident.



We understand that customers with young children may need extra help with our services

What you can expect from us if you need extra help (continued)

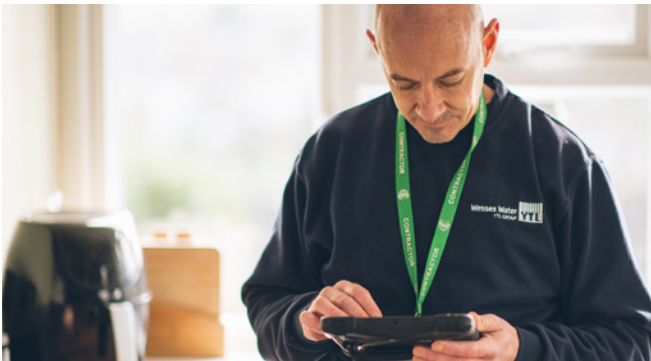
Medical equipment

If the customer needs to use medical equipment such as a nebuliser, sleep apnoea monitor, heart or lung ventilator, oxygen concentrator, stair lift, hoist, electric bed, medicine refrigeration or careline/telecare system they may need extra help including during an emergency.

We promise to:

- consider the time of day and if this changes our priority with our customers
- offer to redirect bills to a carer, family member or friend, if required. We can also withdraw the water and/or sewerage charges if an unmetered property is unoccupied but furnished
- provide help with bills and debt if required
- give advice on water and energy saving.

We can give advice on water and energy saving



Temporary support

We know that we can all need extra help at some point in our lives and this isn't always permanent. Age, bereavement, divorce, redundancy, or post hospital recovery can all affect everyday situations.

We promise to:

- ensure it's easy to notify us and provide the relevant information quickly and efficiently
- promote Tell Us Once services which will help lighten the load
- provide a dedicated online form for a simple way of notifying us of a customer passing away at a time that suits them
- offer a variety of channels to make it easy and accessible to get in touch with us
- be aware of the impact on the customer and treat them sensitively
- make the customer aware they will be supported temporarily and check in with them after a year to see if they still require our support or have more additional needs
- help customers to get support such as a Power of Attorney.

We can all need extra help at some point

Medically dependant showering or bathing/ water dependent

Customers who are medically dependant on showering or bathing need water every day or multiple times a day. This includes skin conditions or degenerative diseases. Any prolonged break in the water supply would put them at significant risk.

A customer who is water dependent is our highest priority during an incident.

We promise to:

- work with these customers during prolonged breaks in water to find alternative accommodation to limit distress.
- help educate customers to prepare and plan for emergencies, especially where water provision is so important.

Water dependent customers are our highest priority during an incident



What you can expect from us if you need extra help (continued)

Additional presence preferred

Some customers do not find being in the presence of a stranger comfortable or possible due to either lived experience such as abuse, crime, or religious requirements. This may result in anxiety and potential risk to all parties involved.

We promise to:

- proactively contact the customer to notify we will visit to allow them to arrange for an additional person to be present
- offer a personal password in the customer's chosen format which we will use every time we visit to help guard against bogus callers
- ensure that all our staff carry an identification card that displays their name, photograph, our logo, and a telephone number to call to check staff's identity
- wait if the customer would like to verify our staff or contact a trusted person to do this on their behalf.



Unable to answer the door

Due to age, a disability or ill health a customer may not be able to answer the door to staff if we need to visit their property. This might be temporary or long term if their health is deteriorating.

We promise to:

- offer to speak to a person of the customer's choice instead of the customer to gain access where appropriate.

Restricted hand movement

This can include conditions such as arthritis, brittle bones or injury and it could be a temporary condition or degenerative change which could get worse with time.

We promise to:

- offer to relocate the meter for free if the customer is having difficulty reading it
- consider alternative options if the bottled water we have provided is difficult to handle.

It's always important that the customer feels safe

What you can expect from us if you need extra help (continued)

Poor sense of taste/smell

A medical loss of smell or taste may affect a customer more acutely during a water quality incident. It could affect their safety if they are unable to sense there is a problem with their water quality.

We promise to:

- engage with the customer by phone or their chosen communication method and prioritise them in a water quality incident
- carry out a water quality check whenever they request one.

Supporting our rural communities

Customers living in rural areas can suffer from what is known as rural vulnerability, due to a combination of poor transport links, lack of broadband, low wages and higher than average house prices.

We promise to:

- continue to be a member of the Rural Services Partnership and Rural England
- support rural projects through the Wessex Water Foundation to improve access to services
- review rural research to ensure we are learning from the findings
- ensure all customers have multiple easy ways to pay their bills.

We offer a personal password which we will use every time we visit

Protecting against bogus callers

Raising awareness of bogus callers and the crimes they commit is something that is important to us. We have put several procedures in place for our staff to follow.

We promise to:

- when we can, give customers advance notice when we visit their property
- offer a personal password in the format of choice which we will use every time we visit to help guard against bogus callers
- offer hard of hearing customers who wish to use the password scheme the means to do so either through a written password or other communication arrangements set up for their specific use
- ensure that every member of staff carries a photo ID card



- wait if the customer would like to verify our staff or contact a trusted person to do this on their behalf
- be part of the local distraction burglary network in the local area
- follow the UK Water Industry Distraction Burglary Protocol
- offer Friends Against Scams training to all customer facing staff
- investigate if a customers thinks there has been a scam and report to the National Cyber Security Centre
- provide videos explaining how to spot scams and identify genuine callers
- provide information on our website about scams and fraud
- continue to support the stopping loan sharks campaign.

Concerns about the welfare of customers

In exceptional circumstances, we might have concerns over the welfare of a customer. We have strong links with local authorities, environmental health teams and emergency services so in emergency situations we may ask for assistance from other agencies.

What you can expect from us if you need extra help (continued)

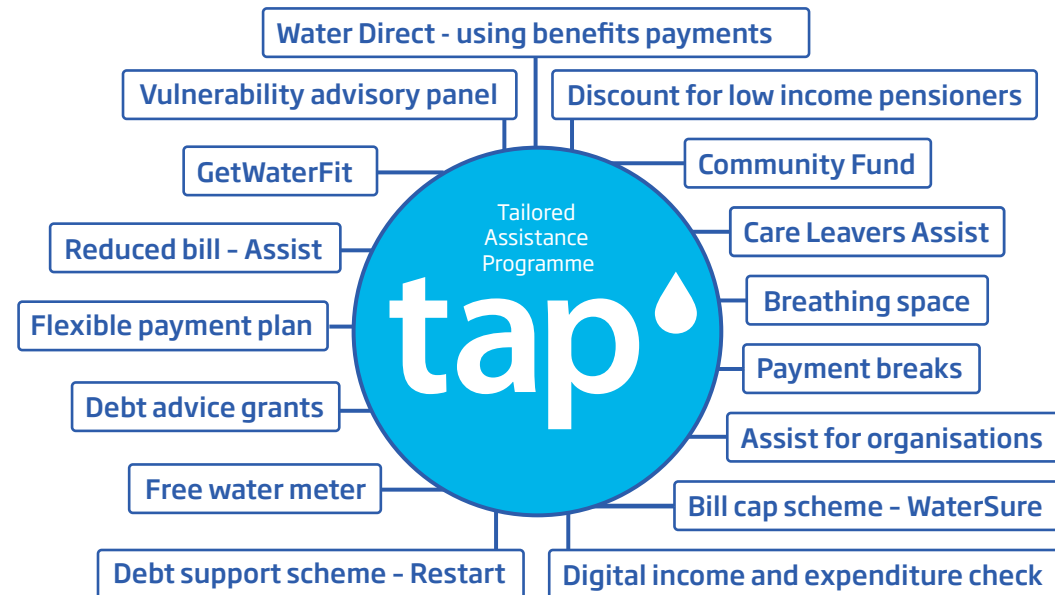
Help with water bills

Our tailored assistance programme, TAP, is one of the most extensive, innovative, and mature affordability support programmes across the water industry.

Through this award-winning programme, we offer a range of schemes and low-rate tariffs to help customers afford their ongoing water charges and repay their debts along with practical help to reduce water and energy bills.

In 2022 we agreed to have common naming conventions for schemes across the water industry which we have adopted.

- **Reduced bill - Assist** - our first main social tariff and the first in the water industry. Assist has six bands, and the customer is placed on the band closest to their ability to pay following debt advice.
- **Bill cap scheme - WaterSure** - an enhanced scheme that reduces the annual bill to bring it in line with the average metered bill rather than the average domestic bill.
- **Discount for low income pensioners** - offering the 'just about managing' 20% off their bills.
- **Assist for organisations** - enables not for profit organisations to pass bill discounts on to young adults who need extra help.
- **Covid Assist** - temporary support for those struggling financially due to Covid-19 who can get back on track after a short period. This was superseded by changes made to Assist in 2022 as a result of the cost-of-living crisis.
- **Reduced bill - Fast Track Assist** - in response to the 'cost of living' crisis, our Assist process was streamlined to fast track customers on to the tariff with a 50% bill reduction before debt advice was received. We removed this from our programme in 2024.



- **Care Leavers Assist** - 90% bill reduction for Care Leavers up to the age of 21
- **Payment breaks or flexible payment plans** - offers customers longer to pay or more time to deal with a change in circumstances, or for short term in problems paying.
- **Water Direct - using benefit payments** - if the customer is behind with their water bill to pay directly to us.
- **Water metering and Home Check** - helping customers reduce water and energy use and backed up by our industry first cash back guarantee designed by our Young People's Panel.
- **Co-delivery of TAP** - through partnerships. More detail on the success of TAP can be found in Appendix II.

We promise to:

- make sure water bills are affordable for all - no one should be unable to afford their water bill
- offer a range of lower-rate tariffs, debt support schemes and flexible ways to pay
- provide customers with a tailored solution that meets their individual financial circumstances
- continue to evolve this programme so that it meets the needs of our customers on the lowest incomes now and into the future
- continue to find opportunities to raise awareness with our customers and encourage early disclosure when they are struggling financially.

Our promise for customers who are not satisfied with the provision of extra help

Find out more →

Help to put things right

We make it easy for customers who are not satisfied with the extra help provided to contact us and seek redress. We offer a range of accessible contact channels and a simple three stage complaints handling procedure for instances when our service has not met expectations. See our complaints procedure here wessexwater.co.uk/complaints





Our staff are trained to go the extra mile, and empowered to do what is right for our customers. If our service falls short, we proactively tell the customer and guide them on how to seek redress.

Our straightforward complaints procedure guides customers on how to make a complaint and what we will do to ensure it is dealt with promptly and effectively. We aim to reply to a complaint within five working days. If we fail to respond within 10 working days, customers will automatically receive compensation under our Wessex Promise as detailed below.

CCW recognised us as the top-performing water and sewerage company (WaSC) in their most recent household complaint handling report, published September 2024. The report highlights that we have been among the best-performing companies for many years and notes our positive impact across the industry by sharing our insights and best practices with other companies to help them improve.

We remain committed to monitoring and delivering our complaints action plan, which includes several initiatives aimed at improving response times, complaint handling, resolution and compensation.


The Wessex Water Promise goes above and beyond the industry standards to ensure our customers are

Complaints			
		Compensation if we fail to keep our Promise	How we'll pay you
Complaints	We will aim to respond to all complaints within five working days. If we fail to respond to a complaint within 10 working days you will receive compensation. We'll respond to a complaint within 10 working days.		Automatic payment
* Payment will be made within 10 working days. If we fail to make a payment within this time we will automatically pay you a penalty payment of £40.			
Alternative supplies of water			
Alternative supplies of water	If your supply is interrupted for more than five hours, we'll make alternative supplies available.		Claim
Priority services			
Registering	We will register you for Priority Services within five working days when you contact us.		Claim
Our commitments	We'll compensate you if you have asked us to do the following and we don't: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • send you a bill in a particular format, eg, braille, large print or other languages. • communicate with you in your preferred way • send an item of literature in the format you choose. 		Claim

fully satisfied and outlines the compensation we will pay if our service falls short. This includes promises around alternative supplies of water during a supply interruption, sewer flooding, Priority Services, and responding to customer contact.

If our service falls short, we proactively tell the customer and guide them on how to seek redress.


Our promise for customers who are not satisfied with the provision of extra help (continued)

Internal sewer flooding		We'll respond to you within	Compensation if we fail to keep our Promise	How we'll pay you
Compensation	If your property is flooded internally with sewage from a public sewer.*	-	Equivalent to annual sewerage charges up to £2,000 per incident (or £300, whichever is greater)	
	If your property is flooded again internally with sewage from the public sewer within 12 months of the first incident.		Second incident: Equivalent to annual sewerage charges up to £2500 or £400 whichever is greater. Third incident: Equivalent to annual sewerage charges up to £3000 or £500 whichever is greater.	
Response times	We'll aim to respond within two hours.	-	-	-
Clean up	We'll aim to provide a free clean up service within 12 hours.	-	-	-
Further contact from us	We'll write to you with your compensation payment. Where required we'll inform you of the action we intend to take and any investigations we intend to make.*	Aim within five working days	-	-
	We'll update you on our investigation into the incident and the next steps we will take.	Aim within one month	-	-

* Compensation payments for internal sewage flooding do not apply if the flooding was caused by your actions or any defect, blockage or inadequacy of private drains or sewers.

** Payment will be made within 20 working days. If we fail to make a payment within this time we will automatically pay you a penalty payment of £40.

*** Each time your property is flooded again internally with sewage from the public sewer within 12 months of the first incident, the minimum payment will increase by £100 and the maximum payment will increase by £500.

External sewer flooding		We'll respond to you within	Compensation if we fail to keep our Promise	How we'll pay you
Compensation	If your property is flooded externally with sewage from a public sewer.*	-	50% of annual sewerage charges up to £1,000 per incident (or £150, whichever is greater)	
	If your property is flooded again externally with sewage from the public sewer within 12 months of the first incident.		Second incident: Equivalent to annual sewerage charges up to £1250, or £200 whichever is greater. Third incident: Equivalent to annual sewerage charges up to £1500, or £250 whichever is greater.***	
Response times	We'll aim to respond within four hours.	-	-	-
Clean up	We'll aim to provide a free clean up service within 24 hours.	-	-	-

* Compensation payments for external sewage flooding do not apply if the flooding happened because of an abnormal or unforeseeable event, including a natural event, outside our control, the consequences of which could not have been avoided by our exercising all due care (unless it is a repeat inadequate capacity issue we're aware of), or the flooding was caused by your actions or any defect, blockage or inadequacy of private drains or sewers.

** Where you need to claim a payment for external sewer flooding, we'll make that payment within 10 working days of your claim. If we fail to do that, you are entitled to claim a penalty payment of £40.

*** Each time your property is flooded again externally with sewage from the public sewer within 12 months of the first incident, the minimum payment will increase by £50 and the maximum payment will increase by £250.

You can find further information about our Promise here wessexwater.co.uk/promises

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) have reviewed the Guaranteed Standards Scheme (GSS) and new legislation is expected later this year. We will update our Promise accordingly to make sure it reflects any changes to existing GSS standards or the introduction of new ones.

Communication provided to PSR customers during an unplanned incident

Extra help during an incident

When a customer signs up for Priority Services, we can better understand the extra help they need. Some customers need more than others if, for example, there is a break in their water supply.

As we share data with energy companies, we have agreed the following priority ratings that we will use during an interruption or wider incidents.

- **Priority 1** - Customers who need extra help and are most at risk if they have a supply interruption, and issue with their supply, or if they need to evacuate their property,
- **Priority 2** - Customers who may require extra help when we visit or have contact with them. It is likely they will have a nominated contact to liaise with us on their behalf.
- **Priority 3** - Customers who need some considerations on how we will communicate with them, and the support needed when visiting.
- **Priority 4** - Customers who are affected the least during an incident.

Priority 1
Water dependent
Dialysis, feeding pump and automated medication
Heart, lung and ventilator

Priority 2
Medically dependent showering/bathing
Chronic/serious illness
Oxygen concentrator
Nebuliser and apnoea monitor
Stair lift, hoist, electric bed
Oxygen use
Physical impairment
Unable to answer door
Restricted hand movement
Blind
Dementia(s)/cognitive impairment
Temporary - post hospital recovery

Priority 3
Poor sense of smell and / or taste (Priority 1 in a water quality incident)
Careline/telecare system
Partially sighted

Priority 4
Hearing impairment (inc. deaf)
Pensionable age
Families with young children five or under
Developmental condition
Mental health
Speech impairment
Unable to communicate in English
Additional presence preferred
Temporary - life changes
Temporary - young adult householder (<18)



If an unplanned incident occurs, our Customer Care Team will contact customers (or their nominated contact) on Priority Services to let them know, find out if they need bottled water or any additional extra help, and continue to keep in touch with them throughout the incident.

Customers who may be experiencing temporary vulnerability and not on the Priority Services Register, can easily contact us to request bottled water using their channel of choice. We can also sign them up for Priority Services when they get in touch.

We ensure the information we provide during an incident is accurate, transparent and easy to understand. We proactively communicate with all affected customers via text messages, social media, and through our website,

providing details about the issue, estimated resolution time, and apologise for any disruption. We also share any health risks and signpost customers to helpful information such as how to clear discoloured water, stay safe after a sewer flood, and seek redress if needed.

We are currently improving our communications during incidents. We will prioritise calls for customers on the Priority Services Register and introduce tailored text messaging for those we can't reach by telephone to check if they need bottled water. We are also introducing post event surveys to ask PSR customers if they were satisfied with our service throughout the event.

Communication provided to Priority Services Register (PSR) customers during an unplanned incident (continued)

Priority	Communication
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone call from Customer Care Team to confirm whether they need bottled water delivered • Text message if they do not answer • Be aware that the customer may have a plan to be evacuated in case of an emergency • Offer assistance through partners such as NHS and local resilience forums
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text message to advise of the incident and if they need bottled water delivered • Be aware that the customer may have a plan to be evacuated in case of an emergency
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text message to advise of the incident and encourage to contact us if they require assistance
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text message to advise of the incident and encourage to contact us if they require assistance



We have a dedicated page on our website telling customers how we will support them during a water supply or sewerage incident. It includes essential information such as how we will keep them updated, how they can prepare, their bottled water rights and entitlement to compensation. Find out more about more about how we manage incidents and outages on our website wessexwater.co.uk/emergencies

We go the extra mile to help customers affected by sewer flooding, aiming to restore their property to normal. We also work to identify the cause of the flooding and ensure they aren't left out of pocket, using a mix of compensation and insurance. Extra help for PSR customers affected by sewer flooding might include, ensuring they are prepared, providing information in braille, large print, or other languages, using a password for safe home visits, allowing extra time to answer the door, contacting a nominated person, or referring them to other helpful organisations.

We offer a free leak repair service for customers with a leak on their private water supply pipe, if the pipe is 12 metres or less. If a customer is on one of our financial support schemes or has additional needs, they may still qualify for the free repair even if their pipe is longer. To help with the cost of leaks, we offer a leakage allowance which adjusts the customer's bill if the leak has caused higher water use.

For internal plumbing issues, such as leaking taps or toilets, we can arrange a visit from one of our plumbers, especially for customers who may not be able to fix the issue themselves.

We also offer free Home Check visits where we can identify and fix leaks where possible, give advice on saving water and energy to reduce bills, and fit free water saving devices. More information about this can be found on our website

wessexwater.co.uk/home-check

What you can expect from us if you need extra help (continued)

Warm welcome

Once registered for Priority Services, our customers will receive a welcome letter to confirm we have added them to our register.

We let them know what is included once they have signed up and the benefits of being on the register.

What it includes:

- giving extra support during an emergency such as a break in the water supply including details of how we will communicate with them and what they can expect throughout
- waiting for them to answer the door if they need a little more time if we need to visit their property
- getting in touch with them using their chosen method of communication or through their nominated contact if they have chosen that option
- confirming we will use their chosen password when we visit the property, and that we will come at a convenient time when someone they have chosen is also present
- information on how they can save water in their home
- giving advice on how they can prepare for an emergency and any ways they can prevent issues happening in their home, such as burst pipes or sewer flooding
- in the unlikely event our workforce strike we would give advance warning so they can plan ahead
- if the customer finds it hard to read their meter in its current location we can see if we can move it or read the meter up to four times a year at their request
- as much as we can plan our works and make consideration to streetworks being carried out around their needs including any treatment they may be receiving at home
- if the customer has an evacuation plan in place for emergency situations we can support with this and liaise with any third-parties such as the NHS.

We also tell them:

- our contact details so they have them if they ever need to speak to us about their bill or have an emergency
- what to do if their situation changes
- that we will contact them every two years to check their information is up to date
- that we may share their information with other organisations and how to opt out if they don't want us to
- how to get help with their bills and debt as well as signposting to additional support they may need.



Check in

It's important that we support our customers in the best way possible. Therefore, we aim to check in every two years to ensure we are providing the best possible service.

Within each two-year period, we will try to contact our Priority Services customers twice by text, email, or post.

We ask them to confirm if their situation or contact details have changed and if they have let us know how else we can support them, or if no longer required, remove them from the register.

This helps us keep their details up to date, allowing us to fully tailor our services to meet their needs.

For the last five years, we have contacted customers in this way as part of an Ofwat performance commitment. Going forward, we will continue to do this as part of Ofwat's PSR standards, which require us to:

- keep records of customers' PSR services up to date
- review with an appropriate degree of regularity
- and at a minimum,
 - achieve actual contact with 55% of households on the PSR every two years; and
 - attempt contact with 90% of households on the PSR every two years.

Our commitment can be found on page 14.

Working together

We are proud that so many charities, authorities and other organisations have reviewed our services – in some cases helped us to design them – and given us permission to display their logo by way of endorsement.



Four workstreams to proactively raise awareness and uptake

It's critical that we maximise awareness and increase uptake of the extra help we can provide.

In 2013, working with our Vulnerability Advisory Panel, we set up four workstreams to help us meet this goal. In this section we describe what has been achieved to date, and our plans for expanding and evolving these workstreams.

1 Using data wisely

This helps us assess the effectiveness and uptake of our support and identify and target activity proactively and effectively

2 Growing partnerships

This workstream is designed to increase the number and variety of our partners and to work with them in a way that suits them to best engage with their clients, who are our customers

3 Community engagement

To extend our reach and engagement across communities to break down barriers to engagement and reach those who might otherwise not have been heard

4 Improving the customer experience

To make it as easy as possible for customers to know about and access our support through the channel of their choice and to have an excellent customer experience

Using data wisely



Collecting and using data to focus help where it's needed most ✓

Sharing data with other utility suppliers, fire services and local authorities so customers only tell us once

Extra support during power cuts or water supply interruptions
Register for Priority Services

Priority Services registration form

Wessex Water

Community engagement



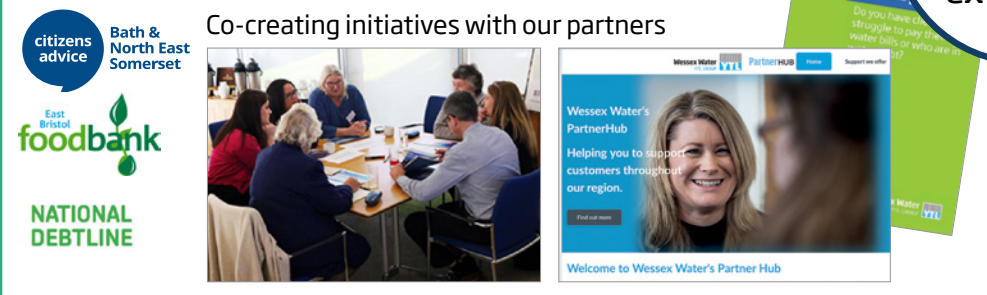
✓ Blue Monday roadshow - Bristol

Helping with the Salvation Army toy appeal ✓

hydrate feel great

Strategy for customers who need extra help

Growing partnerships



Co-creating initiatives with our partners

citizens advice Bath & North East Somerset

foodbank

NATIONAL DEBTLINE

Wessex Water's PartnerHub

Welcome to Wessex Water's PartnerHub

Improving customer experience



Mapping the customer journey

Supporting customers who need extra help

Helping our staff to understand the effects of dementia

Maintaining the highest standards of customer care

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

CSE

To maximise the effectiveness and relevance of our four workstreams, we've engaged directly with customers who need extra help and many partner organisations. This ensures they play an active role in the creation and delivery of services. More information about the development of our strategy is in Appendix II.

Our initiatives

On the following pages we set out the initiatives we have delivered to date and what we're planning to deliver in the future. We have mapped each initiative to the principles or objectives set out in Ofwat's Service for all and Paying Fair guidance. Find out more about [Ofwat's guidelines](#) on their website.

Service for all and Paying Fair key
































Service for all

- 1 High standard of service and support
- 2 Inclusive by design
- 3 Identifying customers
- 4 Recording needs
- 5 Vulnerability strategies

Paying Fair

- 1 Help make it easy for all customers to pay their water bill
 - 2 Make sure customers who are eligible for help receive it when it is needed
 - 3 Treat customers who have their accounts managed by agents as customers of the company*
 - 4 Be proactive in contacting customers in debt
 - 5 Be clear, courteous and non-threatening to customers in debt
 - 6 Agree payments that are right for each customers
 - 7 Treat customers facing debt recovery action with care
- * this is not applicable to us as we do not use third party agents

Workstream	Examples of Wessex Water initiatives from 2013 to date	Service for all	Paying fair
Using data wisely	Targeted activity: We carried out regular econometric analysis using indices of multiple deprivation. This helped us understand our social tariff uptake relative to deprivation on a geographical basis. We shared this data regularly with our debt advice partners to understand best practice, drive improvements in partner performance, target areas of focus and identify where best to fund outreach services.		1 2 4 6
	Joint working: Teaming up with National Grid (previously Western Power Distribution), the Centre for Sustainable Energy, Wellington Medical Centre, and Taunton Deane Borough Council we supported households suffering the health impacts of a cold home and encouraged take-up of TAP and Priority Services.	3	1
	Joint mailshot: Our joint mailshots with StepChange promoted their annual debt advice campaigns. We also targeted their previous clients with information on TAP. Our joint mailshot with Wiltshire Council helped us spread the word about TAP in the most deprived parts of Wiltshire.		2
	Discount for low income pensioners (originally Pension Credit discount): We identified customers in areas of high deprivation whose date of birth made them of pensionable age. We then mailed them to promote our bill discount.		4
	Early warning indicators: Developed a series of indicators to measure the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on payment behaviour and affordability.		4
	Full use of data sharing: We make it as easy and quick as possible for customers to receive the support we offer by using data to automatically apply bill reductions to customers or add customers to our PSR where we can without the need to complete an application. Making full use of data sharing (based on the Digital Economy Act) and data mapping with the Department of Work and Pensions, local councils, fire service, energy distributors, Kidney Care UK and Pennon.	1 3 4	4

Workstream	Examples of Wessex Water initiatives from 2013 to date	Service for all*	Paying fair*
Using data wisely (continued)	Open banking: Explored working with new financial technology companies to provide customers access to open banking solutions either directly or via our partners. There is a range of products available that use open banking to help people better manage and clear their debt, provide support to make financial plans, increase their financial well-being, reduce their uncertainty from one month to the next and throw them a lifeline at times of crisis.		 
	PSR Reach: Worked with the Centre for Sustainable energy to produce PSR reach analysis so we can look at gaps in those groups most in need of being on the register.		
Growing partnerships	Joint publicity: We worked with our many partners – housing associations, job centres, children’s centres, food banks, care centres and credit unions to name a few – providing free, bespoke posters, flyers, editorials, website articles, e-bulletins, and banners for joint publicity campaigns. We also advertise local fire services home safety fire visits within our Priority Services leaflets and on our website.		   
	Bespoke guide: We created a bespoke guide for our partners so that they could signpost and refer people to our services.		 
	Incentivising applications to TAP: We funded a multitude of debt advice partners since 2005 to refer their clients to TAP, totalling more than £5 million. We worked with national Citizens Advice to introduce a funding model that incentivises agencies to improve the quality and increase the number of applications.		    
	Funding to engage customers we need to reach: We provided funding for 27 projects, typically outreach services, to reach the hard-to-reach in our most deprived areas.		 
	Funding to improve financial capability: We provided funding for 52 projects to improve the financial capability and budgeting skills of our customers particularly those who are younger or managing a household budget for the first time, such as care and prison leavers.		 
	Easy applications: We developed an online tailored assistance programme (TAP) application form for debt advice agencies to apply on behalf of their clients. The service has a secure log on and stop/start functionality. This has been updated in 2025.		 
	Registering once: We collaborated with National Grid (previously Western Power Distribution) and Scottish and Southern Electricity Network (SSEN) to signpost and promote two-way Priority Services online and in other communications.	  	
	Accredited agency: We developed an accredited agency scheme with our debt advice partners allowing fast track applications and additional funding for those submitting the highest quality applications to TAP.		   
	Joint projects: To raise awareness of Priority Services and our schemes, we worked with National Grid and Bristol Water on various projects to advertise on pharmacy bags, in hospital magazines handed out to customers in our mutual area. We are also part of the Resource West Group which aims to collaborate on projects in our region to reach all our customers.		

* See key on page 32

Workstream	Examples of Wessex Water initiatives from 2013 to date	Service for all*	Paying fair*
Growing partnerships (continued)	In-home emergency service: We explored partnerships with 'red pull cord' providers with the aim of offering a single in-home emergency service for our Priority Services customers.	3	
	Community project funding: In 2024-25 we put around £365,000 into the Wessex Water Foundation for debt advice and community projects. See page 50 for more information.	1 3	1 2
	Increased partner network: We introduced a new partnership scheme with three tiers of partnership. This will enable us to improve our engagement with more tailored updates. It also gives partners an opportunity to officially say they are a Wessex Water partner.	3	1 2 4 6
	Promotional resources: We worked with foodbanks to print affordability messages on food bags.	3	1 2
	Improved PartnerHub: We evolved our innovative PartnerHub based on user feedback with the objective of increasing the number of partners using it and maximising the opportunities for joint working and self-service. This will also include a quarterly update to all our partners and stakeholders via our e-newsletter PartnerHub Post.	3	1 2 4 6
	Exploring new partnerships: We are always looking at groups of customers we need to support by working with organisations and charities who support them. As well as continuing our relationship with Kidney Care UK we have explored working with Macmillan, Marie Curie and Asthma UK.	1 2 3 5	1 2 4
	Care Leaver Covenant: To understand the needs and challenges of care leavers in our community we joined the Care Leaver Covenant and participated in Care Leavers Week.	2 3	2 6
	Cross company working: Working in collaboration with Wellbeing and Culture Inclusivity and Diversity teams across the business.	1 3 5	2
Community engagement	Advice networks: We continued to be an active member of a variety of advice networks across our region attending meetings, giving talks at events and maximising opportunities for joint working. These include Wiltshire Money, Connecting Advice in Dorset (CAiD), Help and advice across Somerset (HAAS), Somerset Advice Network, Advice UK, Advice centres for Avon (ACFA), Advice North Somerset, village agents, food clubs.	1 2 3	1 2 4 6
	Stakeholder events: We attended public and stakeholder events with and without partners to encourage sign up to our social tariffs, water meters and Priority Services and to promote water-saving advice. Examples include Blue Monday in the Galleries in Bristol, a big energy saving week event in Swanage, Avon Fire Community event in Bristol, Wiltshire Money forum and the Dementia Action Alliance street party. More recently in 2022 we attended many customer face-to-face cost of living events.	2 3	1 2
	Primary Times: We raised awareness of our support schemes and affordability tariffs with parents of primary school age children by advertising in the Primary Times magazine.	3	1 2

* See key on page 32

Workstream	Examples of Wessex Water initiatives from 2013 to date	Service for all*	Paying fair*
Community engagement (continued)	Customer case study: We filmed and recorded an affordability case study to help promote financial support. See page 56 for further information on this.		1
	Accessible sites: Making our reservoir sites more accessible. See case study on page 55.	1 2	
	Community Connectors: The initial two year pilot in Bridport and Chippenham is now complete and the success of these will be rolled out across our region with two new community outreach coordinators	3	1
Improving the customer experience	Breaking down barriers: We have optimised the content, messaging and language on our bills, debt recovery stationery, leaflets, correspondence, and website. Adding success stories, clarifying the benefits of debt advice, and giving simple debt advice pointers has helped us break down any barriers to engagement with customers who are often reluctant to seek our help. We also worked with Quids in! – a social publication – to develop clear calls for action.	2	1 2 5
	Simple application form: We improved and simplified our online tailored assistance programme (TAP) application form.		1
	Specialist training: We asked Money Advice Trust, Mind and Samaritans to provide specialist training for our staff so they can better spot signs of financial difficulty or abuse, mental health, and potential crisis situations. We then published a mental health video and launched an associated eLearning module on mental health for all staff. We also worked with Friends against scams and stopping loan sharks to introduce training to the business.	1 3	2 5
	Going the extra mile (GEM): All our customer-facing staff received bespoke, full day specialist training on how to go the extra mile for customers. Staff continue to receive refresher training and we are continuing to train all new staff through a GEM induction programme. Also worked with Friends against scams and stopping loan sharks to introduce training to the business.	1 3	2 5
	Dementia friendly: We pledged to become a dementia friendly business by the end of 2020. Now we have achieved this, we continue to train all new starters as Dementia Friends when they join the business. We played an active role in developing the Dementia Friendly Utilities Guide (in which Wessex Water features). We have put in place our Dementia Alliance Action Plan.	1 3	1 2 4 5 7
	Help with your bills: We created an animated video - 'Help with your bills' which was used on YouTube, our website and in the waiting rooms of our partners.		1
	Warm voices: By implementing a warm voice direct transfer to StepChange from our own call centre and credit departments we made it easier for those unable to visit a debt advice organisation to receive advice over the phone.		1 2 4 6

* See key on page 32

Workstream	Examples of Wessex Water initiatives from 2013 to date	Service for all*	Paying fair*
Improving the customer experience (continued)	Easy sign-up: We made it much easier for customers to sign up for our debt repayment scheme, Restart, over the phone. And digital sign-up on the doorstep for WaterSure Plus enabled customers to provide photographic evidence of benefits there and then. In 2022 we reviewed the annual renewal process of Watersure by removing the need to provide evidence every year and providing an online form for a more convenient way for customers to let us know they are still eligible. In 2024 we went further by removing the need for customers who apply due to a medical condition to send proof and using the DWP datashare to get proof the customer is on certain benefits.		1 2
	Vulnerability roadshows: Our in-house vulnerability roadshows with customer-facing staff raised awareness and proactive sign-up to Priority Services along with ideas for improvement to the customer journey. We have for the past two years ran vulnerability awareness weeks to continue to support our customers who need extra help.	1 3	
	Vulnerability Experts: We introduced Vulnerability Experts across all customer-facing areas of our business who serve as a point of contact for their business area to provide specialist advice and guidance on how our staff can support customers who need extra help.	1 3	2
	Biannual Check: in Introduced contacting customers who are on our Priority services register every two years to check their needs and details are up to date.	4	
	Warm Welcome: Introduced a warm welcome to Priority Services for the customers who register.	1	
	Scope bill review: The disability charity reviewed our water bill to improve accessibility and ease for our customers. A further review will be done with stakeholders with a disability.	1 2	1 2 5
	Winter Ready Home Visits: In Winter 2021 we offered a selection of our Priority Services customers visits to help prepare their home for cold weather and avoid any unnecessary leaks.	1	
	Royal Association for Deaf People (RAD): Working jointly with RAD, National Grid, SEN and Bristol Water in order to reach our hard of hearing and deaf customers by promoting PSR and affordability. We have also introduced a deaf awareness e-learning course to the business.	1 2 3	1 2
	Affordability review pilot: CCW conducted an independent review, on behalf of Defra and Welsh government, of the current financial support for water customers and made 10 recommendations on how to improve the help available for those who may struggle to pay their water and sewerage bills. A number of pilot projects were launched to explore the recommendations in more detail. We led a pilot to co-design a simple application process that covers all support schemes.		1 2 4 5 7
	Eligibility calculator: We developed a tool for our website which will identify which schemes and tariffs our customers may be eligible for so they can self-serve.		1

* See key on page 32

Workstream	Examples of Wessex Water initiatives from 2013 to date	Service for all*	Paying fair*
Improving the customer experience (continued)	Online form review: Produced new online forms that are much more dynamic in a 'tell us once' approach.	2	1
	Website accessibility: We have undertaken an accessibility audit and improvements have been made to become fully WCAG 2.2 AA compliant.	2	
	Independent advice: We updated our independent advice web page to include a range of organisations that support customers who need extra help. In 2024 we partnered with our Resource West group and National Support Network to provide a signposting tool for our customers and staff. See page 60	1	2
	Economic abuse: Signed up to principles of economic abuse for the water sector.	1	2
	Online help to pay journey: Implemented and trialled an online journey with IE Hub and Money Wellness to provide support with help to pay.		1 2
	Customer journey mapping: End-to-end incident management review and Smart Meter Journey Mapping with PSR personas	2	
	Inclusive Service Transition: And worked towards the new ISO inclusive service standard	2 5	
	Improving communications: Developed planned works information for Blue Badge holders to reassure users	1 2	
	Social media: Explored the use of Tik Tok and Fin Tok content to reach younger audiences for affordability and water efficiency		1 2
	WaterSure review: Removed the need for a signed letter from a GP, by moving to a self declaration approach. We are now also using the DWP data share to help automate renewal for the family element of the scheme. We also took part in the CCW review of WaterSure.		1 2
	Open banking: We will explore working with new financial technology companies to provide customers with access to open banking solutions either directly or via our partners. There is a range of products available that use open banking to help people better manage and clear their debt, provide support to make financial plans, increase their financial well-being, reduce their uncertainty from one month to the next and throw them a lifeline at times of crisis.		1 2

* See key on page 32

This is a summary of the initiatives we have delivered over the last financial year, 2024-25

Using data wisely

- Used DWP data share to renew and auto-enrol customers for WaterSure
- Explored data sharing with Kidney Care
- Identified our vulnerability and water poverty gaps
- Became a member of the steering group for Northumbrian support for all hub pilots /national data share workstreams
- Continued to work on opportunities to auto-enrol certain groups of customers to social tariffs - care leavers, those with mental ill health, terminal illness, parent carers, those with a disability or medical condition
- Explored data share with Pennon for PSR and social tariffs
- Worked with the Centre for Sustainable energy to produce PSR reach analysis



Growing partnerships

- Explored opportunities to work with Marie Curie and Macmillan
- Collaborated with other water companies and energy distributors in the south west through Resource West
- Continued our project with Kidney Care UK
- Industry Vulnerability sub group launched
- Joined the care leavers covenant
- Ran two debt advice workshops for funded partners
- Explored working with Asthma and Lung UK
- Put £365k into the Wessex Water Fund for debt advice and the Community Fund
- Continued memberships in Money Advice Liaison Group, Rural Services Partnership, Rural England, Disability Rights UK, Collaboration Network
- Explored improving funding reporting requirements
- Started to advertise our schemes and Priority Services in hospitals
- Worked in collaboration with Wellbeing and Culture Inclusivity and Diversity teams across the business
- Explored funding social landlords
- Participated in Care Leavers Week
- Members of various councils' cost of living groups
- Launched updated help with bills online application form for partners



Community engagement

- Continued memberships with advice networks
- Introduced two new community outreach coordinators
- Ran five training sessions with partners
- Attended 14 ad hoc events
- Supported community foundations surviving winter fund



Improving the customer experience

- Ran another vulnerability awareness week internally
- Worked towards the new ISO inclusive service standard
- 700 staff have now completed Friends Against Scams training
- Produced a Kidney Care case study video
- Developed work with customers who have lived experience
- Experts gave talks to staff on different topics of vulnerability
- End-to-end incident management review and Smart Meter Journey Mapping with PSR personas
- Continued to work with our digital team to ensure website accessibility
- Trialled a new online help to pay journey with IE Hub and Money Wellness
- Gathered customer insight from those on PSR and social tariffs
- Planned works support for Blue Badge holders
- Promoted schemes on TikTok
- Improved WaterSure sign up process
- Signed up to National Support Network



Our future initiatives

Workstream	Wessex Water initiatives to 2030	Service for all*	Paying Fair*
Using data wisely	Smart metering: We will fit 240,000 smart meters to help household customers in more water stressed areas of our region have more control over their water and energy use.		1
	Innovative tariffs: We will continue to look at how we can design tariffs that create the right incentives for customers and help tackle affordability.		2
	Evolved data mapping: We will build on and develop our extensive demographic data mapping using our own and external sources of information such as socioeconomic status, benefits data, disposable income, health measures, conditions, and disabilities as well as local authority data on free school meals and benefit recipients. We will layer this data to get a comprehensive view of affordability and vulnerability at the customer level. This will help us identify customers who need extra help, target our information campaigns, and quantify the proportion we are already supporting. By sharing the data with our partners, we will continue to help them identify hotspot areas and target outreach services. We will also work on embedding this intelligence into our systems, improving how we make decisions and how we identify customers who need extra help in real-time. We will explore a range of demographic and water poverty tools that may help us target customers in need of support most.	1 3 5	1 2
	Full use of data sharing: We will introduce new data sharing agreements with the other councils, social landlords, energy suppliers and the fire service in our region to make it as easy and quick as possible for customers to receive the support we offer. We will use this data to automatically apply bill reductions to customers or add customers to our PSR where we can without the need to complete an application. We will work on the National Data Share project and support Northumbrians Support for All project. We will also make full use of data sharing (based on the Digital Economy Act).	1 3	2 4
	Data sharing with Scope: We will explore data sharing with Scope to auto-enrol customers to schemes.		2
	Identify, tailor, communicate: To better identify customers who need extra help and allow us to tailor our communication and collections more effectively, we will introduce more sophisticated segmentation within our billing and debt recovery systems utilising multiple internal and external data sources.		2
	Behavioural insights: Behavioural insights such as payment behaviour and contact frequency help us to identify customers who need additional support. We will use behavioural techniques such as 'nudging' to encourage take-up of services such as TAP or Priority Services.	3	1
	Monitoring developments: We will follow national and local developments that have the potential to increase or decrease the vulnerability of our customers and continuously assess their implications for our work. We will adopt any new Single social tariff or WaterSure changes proposed by Defra.	3	1

* See key on page 32

Our future initiatives (continued)

Workstream	Wessex Water initiatives to 2030	Service for all*	Paying Fair*
Using data wisely (continued)	Home Check: Explore targeting those in high areas of deprivation using lots of water for our Home Check service and tying in with energy efficiency		1
	GAP Data: Reach more customers using PSR and water poverty tools and data	3 4	1 2 4
	Water poverty tool: We will continue to explore the use of water poverty tools to better understand who needs extra help and address water poverty.		2
	Explore referral partnerships: Explore referral partnerships where data is shared by improving the customer journey.	3	2 6
	Explore referral portals: Explore referral portals which we can use to get customers to independent debt advice quicker and improve the customer journey.	3	2 6
	Auto-enrol customers onto schemes: We will explore more opportunities to auto-enrol certain groups of customers on to social tariffs – care leavers, those with mental ill health, life limiting illness, parent carers, those with a disability or medical condition.		1
	Priority Services welcome: Developing our welcome to Priority Services further so customers understand what services they have signed up to for individual needs	1 4	
	Voice analytic technology: We will explore the use of voice analytic technology to better serve customers who need extra help.	1 3	2
Growing partnerships	Continuing evolution: We will continue to learn from and directly involve our partner organisations and stakeholders, including our Vulnerability Advisory Panel, in the ongoing evolution of our support for customers who need extra help.	1 2	1 2
	National groups: Membership of national forums such as the Money Advice and Pensions Service, Council Income Max Group, the Money Advice Liaison Group, Rural Services Partnership, Rural England, Disability Rights UK, and the Collaboration Network, illustrates our support for work around vulnerability at a national level and gives us the opportunity to champion the needs of our water customers who need extra help.	1 2	1 2
	Improved Partner Hub: Stage two of improvements to our Partner Hub will include further development with bespoke content and sign-in features. We will link this to our stakeholder relationship management system.	3	1 2

* See key on page 32

Our future initiatives (continued)

Workstream	Wessex Water initiatives to 2030	Service for all*	Paying Fair*
Growing partnerships (continued)	Data sharing: We will explore data sharing with credit reference agencies.		1 2
	Kidney Care UK: Continue our project with Kidney Care UK to support our customers who need most support especially during incidents.	1 2 4	1 2
	Partnership tiers: Continue to grow and develop the way we work with partners and our tier system.	1 2 3	1 2 4
	Working with organisations: Supporting blind customers, those with heart conditions and those who are neurodiverse to increase uptake of PSR, provide training for staff and improve services.	1 2 3	1 2 4
	Advertising: Continue to look for different opportunities to advertise our schemes and Priority Services.	1	1 2
	Community project funding: We will continue to fund a variety of environmental and community projects through the Wessex Water Foundation, focusing on schemes we have previously funded that are shown to be effective and innovative.	1 3	1 2
	Increased partner network: Our network of partners already exceeds 300. We will continue to create new partnerships with cultural, religious, local niche groups, health centres, hospitals and GPs, half-way houses, day care centres, Mumsnet, baby banks, health visitors, midwives, Life Line, Neighbourhood Watch, Motability centres, energy suppliers, health charities, domestic violence organisations and specific disease/disability clinics. We will continue to offer free training and promotional resources to all new partners and supermarkets, establish an effective way of working with them and their clients that suits them best. We will add all new and existing partners to our new partnership tiers.	3	1 2 4 6
	Resource West: Collaborating with other water companies and energy distributors in the south west through Resource West.	3	1
	Referral opportunities: We'll explore and seek out more opportunities to increase the number of referral partners we work with.	3	1 4 6

* See key on page 32

Our future initiatives (continued)

Workstream	Wessex Water initiatives to 2030	Service for all*	Paying Fair*
Growing partnerships (continued)	Promotional resources: Our aim is to develop even more innovative, free, and bespoke promotional resources for partners.	2	1 2 4 6
	Joint projects: To reach customers who need extra help and promote available support, we will develop and fund additional joint projects with partners such as local authorities, housing and social care providers and foodbanks, building on lessons learned from previous projects such as Wiltshire Council, Wellington Homes, RAD, and Scope.	3 5	1 2
Community engagement	Stakeholder events: We will continue to attend and support public and stakeholder events with our partners across our communities. We'll use learning from other events and community work to make them engaging and interactive, and we'll promote them via our Partner Hub.	2 3	1 2
	Proactive advice: Advice networks in the Wessex Water region include Wiltshire Money, Bristol Older People's Forum, Connecting Advice in Dorset, North Somerset Together, Advice UK, Advice centres for Avon, Advice North Somerset, and the Bristol Financial Inclusion Forum. Continuing to work proactively with these networks will increase the depth and breadth of our local partnerships.	1 2 3	1 2
	Community projects: We will support community projects by providing staff volunteers through our Water Force programme, and look for opportunities to work with organisations that support our customers	3	2
	Rainwater separation: Support customers to save water and money and separate their surface water at source by offering them a free Home Check visit, a free water butt along with solutions to divert the rainwater from their roofs.		2
	Community outreach coordinators: Introduce a third new community outreach coordinator who will set up drop-in sessions in our joint area with Bristol Water to talk to customers face-to-face in the community about bills, water efficiency, metering, affordability help and Priority Services.	2 3	1
	Advice networks: We continued to be an active member of a variety of advice networks across our region attending meetings, giving talks at events and maximising opportunities for joint working. These include Wiltshire Money, Connecting Advice in Dorset (CAiD), Help and advice across Somerset (HAAS), Somerset Advice Network, Advice UK, Advice centres for Avon (ACFA), Advice North Somerset, village agents, food clubs.	1 2 3	1 2 4 6
Improving the customer experience	Research: We will undertake research with customers - particularly those on Priority Services - to gain invaluable feedback on their experience of billing and operational contact, which we can use in our continuous improvement programme overseen by our Customer Experience Group. We will explore the options to work with customers who have lived experience of vulnerability.	1 2	1 2

* See key on page 32

Our future initiatives (continued)

Workstream	Wessex Water initiatives to 2030	Service for all*	Paying Fair*
Improving the customer experience (continued)	Journey mapping: We will regularly review our customer journeys to make sure they meet the needs of customers who may need extra support. Areas of focus in the future will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access and registration (single sign up for TAP and Priority Services) • digital opportunities such as providing photographic evidence • communication channels ie, looking at Whatsapp as a contact channel, or video calling (general and during events) • include PSR personas and complainants and consider how clear is it throughout the journey to disclose their needs or raise concerns if needed. 	1	1
	Continuous review: We will continuously review the eligibility criteria for Priority Services and TAP. We will use research to inform our product enhancement recommendations.	1 2	1
	Filling the gap: We will continue to provide our own service with specially trained members of staff for those customers who cannot or will not access independent debt advice and may be excluded from accessing support through TAP.		2
	Specialist training: We will build on our existing Going the Extra Mile (GEM) training programme and identify further opportunities for specialist training for our customer-facing staff by looking at the data from customer on our PSR and customer feedback. This follows the success of training with Mind, Money Advice Trust, Samaritans, and the Alzheimer's Society. We will continue to develop eLearning modules, information videos and to run our in-house vulnerability roadshows.	1 3	2 5
	Self-service: We will introduce additional and effective self-service capabilities on our customer billing portal, and we will link this to TAP and Priority Services, including an online benefits calculator tool	1	1
	Smart conversations: Conversational platforms such as Amazon Alexa are an opportunity for us to develop support for Priority Services customers.	1	
	PSR standards: Embed the new PSR guaranteed standard and GSS standards, improve our welcome to PSR and introduce new priority contact during incidents.	1	
	Economic abuse: We will develop a web page dedicated to the principles of economic abuse - we will explore the use of a Green Exit button on this page.	3	2
	National Cold Call Protocol: We have adopted the principles within the protocol but aim to formalise this and raise awareness within the business.	1	5
	Improve our digital affordability journey: Introduce Lightning Reach, a financial support portal which enables access to a range of personalised support (eg, grants, benefits, help with their bills) - all in one place.		1

* See key on page 32

Our future initiatives (continued)

Workstream	Wessex Water initiatives to 2030	Service for all*	Paying Fair*
Improving the customer experience (continued)	Use of Sight Line streetworks: We will explore the use of Sightline streetworks additional to the Highways code of practice we already follow.	1	
	Signposting to Floodline: Introduce touchpoints for customers where we can promote the Environment Agency's Floodline.	1	
	Signposting to Telecoms: We have updated our online form but we will explore more touchpoints where we can signpost our customers to the Telecoms, broadband and pay-TV priority services.	3	
	Accessible sites: Consider introducing tramper mobility scooter to enhance what we already offer at our accessible sites.	1	
	Innovative touchpoints: We will identify further and more innovative touchpoints such as improved bill design, meter installations, welcome packs, signage, social media, van sides, giveaways that can be used to promote support services.	2	1
	Best Practice: Achieve ISO 22458:2022 Consumer vulnerability.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
	Single social Tariff: Work with Defra to introduce a new single social tariff.		1 2
	Single view of the customer: Provide greater visibility to operational staff where customers are in financial difficulty so we can support customers during operational incidents which may affect them financially.	1	
	Online safe spaces: Exploring the use of an online widget to remove internet browsing history for those being abused and look at other ways we can support customers living through domestic abuse.	1	
	Lived experience: Utilise our customer panel gaining lived experience knowledge and continuing to invite and seek experts to provide insight into different topics of vulnerability. We also intend to undertake research with deafPLUS and their community	1 2	1

* See key on page 32

This is a summary of the initiatives we will deliver over this financial year, 2025-26

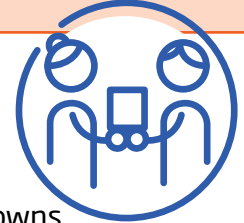
Using data wisely

- Continue to work on national PSR data share
- Increase data sharing with councils and fire services
- Reach more customers using PSR and water poverty gap data
- Continue to explore referral portals with debt advice agencies
- Continue to work on opportunities to auto-enrol certain groups of customers to social tariffs - those with mental ill health, terminal illness, parent carers, those with a disability or medical condition
- Explore targeting those in high areas of deprivation using lots of water for our Home Check service and tying in with energy efficiency



Community engagement

- Continue memberships with advice networks and council income maximisation networks
- Introduce a third new community outreach coordinator
- Run 10 training sessions, including for WaterMark towns
- Attend 10 ad hoc events



Improving the customer experience

- Run another vulnerability awareness week
- Obtain new ISO inclusive service standard
- Utilise our lived experience panel
- External experts to give talks to staff on different topics of vulnerability
- Ensure our programme of journey mapping includes vulnerability personas
- Offer customers access to grants and support scheme via Lightning Reach
- Explore offering an online benefits tool for customers and track take up
- Embed the new PSR guaranteed standard
- Improve our welcome to PSR
- Work with DEFRA to introduce a new single social tariff
- Introduce new priority contact during incidents
- Provide greater visibility to operational staff where customers are in financial difficulty
- Introduce a widget on our website to remove internet history trace for those being abused
- Provide customers with information on preparing for an emergency
- Undertake research with DeafPlus and their community



Growing partnerships

- Continue our project with Kidney Care UK
- Continue to grow the number of partners on tiers
- Make improvements to our PartnerHub website
- Explore opportunities to work with organisations using our PSR and water poverty gap data
- Run two debt advice workshops for funded partners
- Put £380k into the Wessex Water Fund for debt advice and the Community Fund
- Continue memberships in Money Advice Liaison Group, Rural Services Partnership, Rural England, Disability Rights UK, Collaboration Network, and Business Disability Forum
- Continue to advertise our affordability schemes and PSR
- Working with organisations supporting blind customers, those with heart conditions and those who are neurodiverse to increase uptake of PSR, provide training for staff and improve services



The importance of our 'growing partnerships' workstream

Breaking down barriers to engagement

Our partnerships have been highly effective. We were given a social policy award by Citizens Advice and highlighted as an example of best practice in the Money Advice and Pensions Service Strategic Toolkit for Creditors.

Partnerships with advice organisations are vitally important to break down the barriers of engagement with customers, particularly those in financial vulnerability. We not only fund debt advice agencies who refer on to TAP but we also work with a wide range of other advice/support organisations to support customers who need extra help. We work with our partners in whatever way they wish.



We currently fund 38 debt advice partners to provide support to our customers

The debt advice sector

Customers who need the most support from us, such as the discounts available on our Assist tariff, are required to seek independent debt advice, be that face-to-face, online or over the telephone.

We have developed very successful partnerships over the years with the debt advice sector and other organisations supporting customers who need extra help. Our first was with a local Citizens Advice just outside Bath in 2005 and we've gone on to partner with all Citizens Advice across our region as well as StepChange, National Debt Line, Christians Against Poverty, Scope, Money Wellness and a range of local independent debt advice agencies including cultural, faith, foodbanks and niche organisations, along with tenant support workers in housing associations and councils.

We signpost or refer to and fund these agencies. We believe it's essential that customers receive holistic debt advice and budgeting support along with income maximisation. It is never just about water; customers generally have multiple debts to multiple creditors. These trusted third parties are far better able to determine a sustainable offer of payment, however small, based on true ability to pay.

We provide our partners with a dedicated relationship manager and regular meetings through the year. We also hold annual workshops to share and learn. Partners have access to a dedicated team in our billing centre for queries and applications to our schemes with a direct dial freephone and access to a range of free resources. We provide a full, free training service for their staff and volunteers on all our support schemes. Partners have played an integral part in the co-design of TAP, this wider vulnerability strategy and more recently taken part in the CCW pilot we completed.

Funding debt advice partners

We currently fund 38 organisations to provide this support to our customers. Since 2020 we have had a commitment in place to receive at least 2,300 successful applications for TAP each year from our debt advice partners. As a result the numbers of customers supported by TAP are increasing year on year.

In addition, we fund community based projects through the Wessex Water Foundation.

Our total funding is around £500,000 per year.

In 2022-23, we predicted an increase in demand for debt advice services due to the cost-of-living crisis and many agencies were still struggling to get back to full capacity post Covid. So, we injected an additional £160,000 into the sector.

This funded seven new projects which were a mix of additional debt adviser training courses, funding more advisor roles and hours, establishing new cost-of-living advisor roles, and funding presence in warm spaces and other outreach. These are now complete and were very successful.

In-home advice

For those customers who cannot or will not access independent debt advice we provide our own in-home service with specially trained members of staff.

The importance of our 'growing partnerships' workstream (continued)

Widening our partnerships

Over the last 10 years, we have worked hard to grow our partnerships beyond debt advice. Our network of partners already exceeds 300.

Through the initiatives in our growing partnerships workstream, we aim to raise awareness and increase take up of our schemes. We aim to increase the number and variety of our partners and to work with them in a way that suits them to best engage with their clients, who are our customers. Examples of organisations we work with are councils, health charities, the DWP, housing associations, children's charities, food banks to name a few.

We established PartnerHub, our bespoke partners' website (partnerhub.wessexwater.co.uk) in 2017 and following this produced our quarterly e-newsletter PartnerHub Post. We offer many resources such as training videos, training sessions, bespoke promotional materials, and fund specific projects.

We value our membership of national forums such as Money Advice and Pensions Service, Money Advice Liaison Group, ESAN (The Essential Services access network), Rural Services Partnership, Rural England, Disability Rights UK, Institute of Customer Service, Citizens Advice cost-of-living Briefings, the Business Disability Forum, Safe Guarding Working Group, and the Collaboration Network. Through these, we can demonstrate our support for work around vulnerability at a national level, champion the needs of our water customers who need extra help and learn from best practice.

We're also members of several local advice networks in the Wessex Water region including Wiltshire Money, Bristol Older People's Forum, Advice Dorset Partnership, North Somerset Cost of Living working group, Advice UK, Advice centres for Avon, BANES Income Maximisation Group, Dorset Together - Cost of Living Working Group and BANES interagency group. Through these, we can proactively work with and contribute to forums and newsletters reaching a wider variety of local partners.

Partnership tiers

In 2023 we launched our Partnership tiers, distinguishing those partners who simply want to advertise our services from those who want to signpost or ultimately refer on to our schemes. The three tiers of partnership help us improve our engagement with tailored updates and better track how we can work best with each organisation. It also gives partners an opportunity to officially say they are a Wessex Water partner.

Tier	Who	How you work with us	What you get from us
1	Members will work with us in one or more of the following ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • funded to provide independent advice • have a data share agreement with us • be a Stakeholder Vulnerability Advisory Panel member • be an affiliate organisation - of whom we are a member • train other organisations on our schemes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be well informed of, provide expert advice to, and influence our Vulnerability Strategy. • Collaborate on joint projects to help reach more customers and raise awareness of schemes. • As a funded partner follow the criteria on our PartnerHub website • Sign up to our PartnerHub Post enews. • Use PartnerHub to order resources (leaflets/social media pack etc) or directly access our online form. • Use resources on PartnerHub to be informed of our affordability schemes. (Receive our training pack or downloaded videos). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listed in our Vulnerability Strategy and our PartnerHub website as a Vulnerability Partner, which is seen by other stakeholders. • Use our Wessex Water logo and let people know you are working 'in partnership' with us. • Quarterly e-newsletter PartnerHub Post. • Use of our PartnerHub website. • Relevant communications based on your tier of partnership. • More information on being a funded partner can be found on our PartnerHub website.
2	Members will provide advice and direct referrals or signpost customers to our schemes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign up to our PartnerHub Post enews. • Use PartnerHub to order resources (leaflets/social media pack etc) or directly access our online forms. • Use resources on PartnerHub to be informed of our affordability schemes. (Receive our training pack or downloaded videos). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free training on our schemes for your staff and volunteers. • Opportunity to apply for funding under our Community Fund. • We can attend community events or get involved in community projects you are working on to reach customers in financial difficulty.
3	Members will advertise our schemes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign up to our PartnerHub Post enews. • Use PartnerHub to order resources (leaflets/social media pack etc). 	

The importance of our 'growing partnerships' workstream (continued)

Here is a list of some of the partners in each tier. The remainder will be placed into a tier over the coming year or so.

Tier 1 Includes:

38 funded partners, 13 Vulnerability Advisory Panel members, 20 affiliated organisations and 7 data share partners:

Talking Money	Ignite Life
Scope	Money Wellness
StepChange	Trowbridge Debt Advice
Money Advice Trust,	Brigstowe
Christians Against Poverty	Navigate
CA Bristol	Centre for Sustainable
CA BANES	Energy
CA Bridport and District	South and East Bristol
CA Central Dorset	Foodbank
CA Somerset	Grace Advocacy
CA Bournemouth	Bristol Somali Resource
CA Christchurch & Poole	Centre
CA South	Data share partners (see
CA Gloucestershire	right)
CA Wiltshire	Vulnerability Advisory
CA East Dorset and	Panel members (see page
Purbeck	7)
CA West Somerset	National and local forums
CA North Somerset	(see page 30)
Faithworks Wessex:	IE Hub
Filwood Hope	Kidney Care UK
South Bristol Advice	Curo
Service	Abri
Hope Debt Advice Service	SNG
St Pauls Advice Centre	Selwood Housing
North Bristol Advice	Magna
Bristol North West	Better Pathways
Foodbank	Helen Pettifer Training
1625 Independent people	NEA

Tier 2 Includes:

The Rise Trust	Baby Bank Network
Salvation Army	Turn2Us
Emmaus Bristol	The Nest Project
Springboard Opportunity	GreenSquare
Group	Accord
Doorway Wiltshire	The Gospel Truth Church
RNIB	Wiltshire Council.
The Nest Project	Pocket Power

Tier 3 Includes:

Golden-Oldies	Rethink Mental Illness
Waste-Not-Want-Not	Ridgewater Energy

For more information, or to sign up or confirm your tier as a Wessex Water Partner contact communitypartners@wessexwater.co.uk

Data sharing

We now have data sharing agreements with:

The DWP	North Somerset Council
National Grid Electricity	South Gloucestershire
Distribution	Council
Scottish and Southern	Bristol City Council
Electricity Networks	
Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Service.	

Through these agreements we are able to share and receive data of customers who either need to be on Priority Services or need help with their water bill or debt.

In many cases we are able to automatically enrol customers onto our support schemes without the need for them to apply.



We have a longstanding, successful relationship with Wessex Water. We frequently collaborate and share best practice to deliver better outcomes for our customers in a cost effective way. We have worked on many joint projects promoting the PSR and have co-hosted events to raise awareness with new and existing partners.

We have two-way data sharing of Priority Services data in place so customers can be supported by multiple organisations having joined one PSR. Working together drives innovation, enables us to be more effective and delivers more value for our customers.

I am privileged to be a member of Wessex Water's Vulnerability Advisory Panel and am grateful for the opportunity to share best practice and influence change for customers in vulnerable situations.

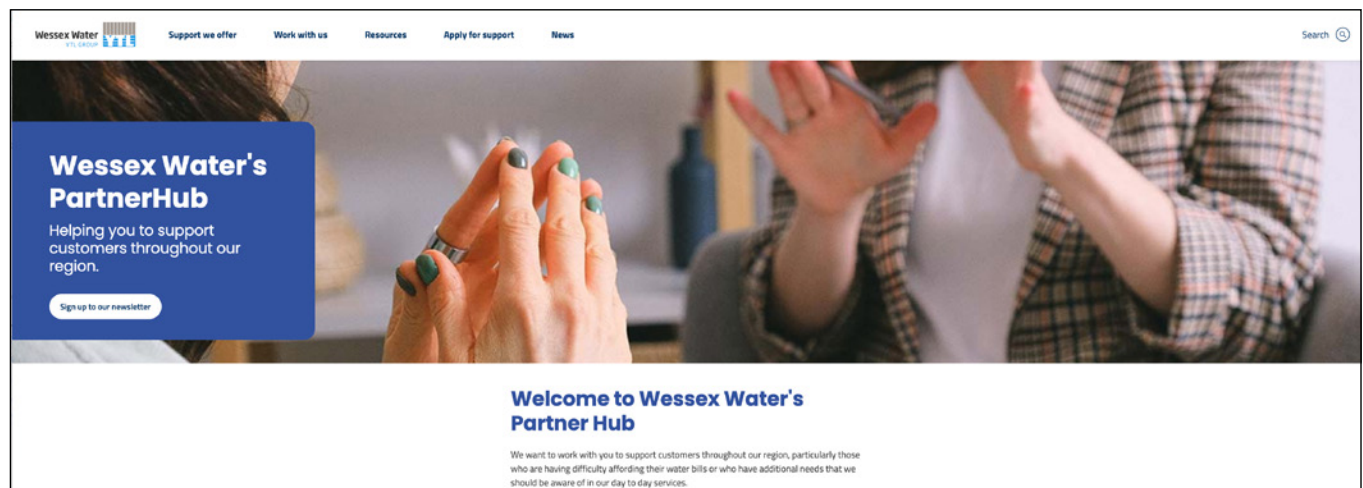
Nicki Johnson
National Grid Electricity Distribution

The importance of our 'growing partnerships' workstream (continued)

Working in partnership

Benefits of partnership working		
To customers	To advice organisations	To Wessex Water
Improved access to impartial and independent free advice	A creditor who trusts their judgement and accepts their assessment of ability to pay	Ability to identify those who can't afford to pay
Benefits advice and income maximisation	Sustainable solution for clients to help them afford ongoing water charges and/or repay debt	Increased cash collection which more than covers additional administration costs of TAP and reduces the impact on other customers' bills
Holistic approach to debt management dealing with debts in a sensible and sustainable way	Funding to increase capacity and see more clients	Expert advice from advice agency staff to help us co-create innovative new tariffs and schemes and to improve our processes
Water bill they can afford to pay and no outstanding debt to worry about	Joint working in the community and free resources	Increase in awareness among our customers of TAP along with water meters, water efficiency advice, Priority Services etc
Auto-enrolled to schemes without the need to apply	Ability to co-create tariffs, schemes and process change with a creditor	Data share agreements to quickly identify those needing support

We established PartnerHub, our bespoke partners' website, in 2017 offering resources such as training videos, training sessions, bespoke promotional materials, and funding for specific projects.



Funding in the community

Financial capability - Money Matters

Although we offer a wide range of support to customers who are already financially vulnerable, we have a wider role to play in society to help customers avoid getting into difficulty in the first place. We are strong advocates of improving financial capability and budgeting skills, so we set up our Money Matters scheme in 2013. We have funded 52 Money Matters projects aimed at improving financial capability and budgeting skills among a diverse range of customer groups.

Customers we need to reach (previously Hard to reach) projects

Organisations face the same challenges as us engaging with customers and their funding levels often mean they are unable to offer sufficient local community-based outreach services.

We have used our own data to help organisations identify hot spots in their geographic areas where outreach services would be beneficial. We have funded 27 projects aimed at raising awareness and increasing take-up of assistance among our hardest to reach customers.

We actively encouraged groups to test new and innovative approaches, with no penalty for failure, as this is about identifying solutions that work. We have shared the evaluation of these projects so that effective and innovative models can be rolled out by others.

Wessex Water Foundation

The Wessex Water Foundation provides funding to projects that strengthen communities and benefit the local environment.

It has never been more important to both respond to the needs of our communities and make a firm commitment to support them now and in the future, and the Wessex Water Foundation allows us to do just that.

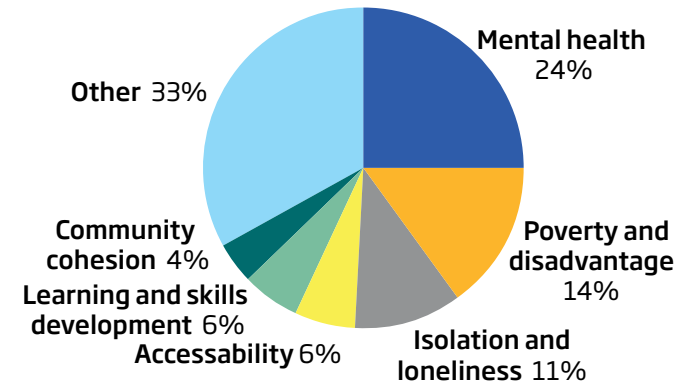
The foundation was launched in 2020 in partnership with the Somerset, Wiltshire, Dorset and Quartet Community Foundations, which help to ensure our funding goes towards the communities that are in most need of support.

Grants totalling at least £500,000 are distributed every year. We have two main grant rounds with open applications, the Community Fund and Environment Fund which are open to the community each year. The Foundation also distributes the core debt advice funding mentioned earlier in this strategy and five-year grants for larger environmental projects through the Partners Programme.

The Community Fund opens every autumn and aims to support community-based activities or projects that meet a local need and seek to improve the lives of local people. These activities or projects should be informed by the people or community they serve and have considerable reach, with priority given to work that fulfils one of more of the following:

- takes place in areas of multiple deprivation or rural isolation where people lack access to local services
- helps build stronger communities - enabling people to work together and create solutions to local challenges
- helps people take steps to manage or avoid debt and build their financial capability. This can include

Top issues addressed by the Community Fund in 2024-25



activities that raise awareness and take up of utility affordability support such as the Wessex Water schemes. Grants of up to £4,000 are awarded.

In 2024-25 the Community Fund supported several groups including:

- Alzheimer's Support in Wiltshire were awarded £1,000 towards the running of their Sidmouth Street Club in Devizes
- Open House Shaftsbury in Dorset received a grant of £4,000 towards their running costs. The charity provides a friendly drop-in advice service from trained advisers, food and non-food emergency aid, a community fridge and a welcoming space for anyone living in the Shaftsbury area
- Nailsea & District Community Transport based in North East Somerset were awarded a grant of £2,000 to help support their existing and new demands for transport services for older and disabled residents. Their services enable passengers, who may struggle accessing transport, to retain their independence and reduce social isolation in rural communities
- Somerset based Edventure Frome were awarded £4,000 towards their Enterprising Women course, the development of a new community fridge site at Frome College and the MAKE Shed for disadvantaged people in and around Frome.

A measure of our success

This next section gives you some more detail of our work through a series of case studies.

Case studies

Supporting customers through the cost-of-living crisis

We are concerned about the enormous pressures on household finances from the cost-of-living crisis. Additionally, the significant but essential investment we have planned between 2025 and 2030 to deliver a highly ambitious set of outcomes, will see bills rise even more. We have already explained throughout this document many of the changes we are making and the initiatives we have to support customers in financial difficulty.

Here are a few key new changes as a result of the cost-of-living crisis.

Data matching with the DWP

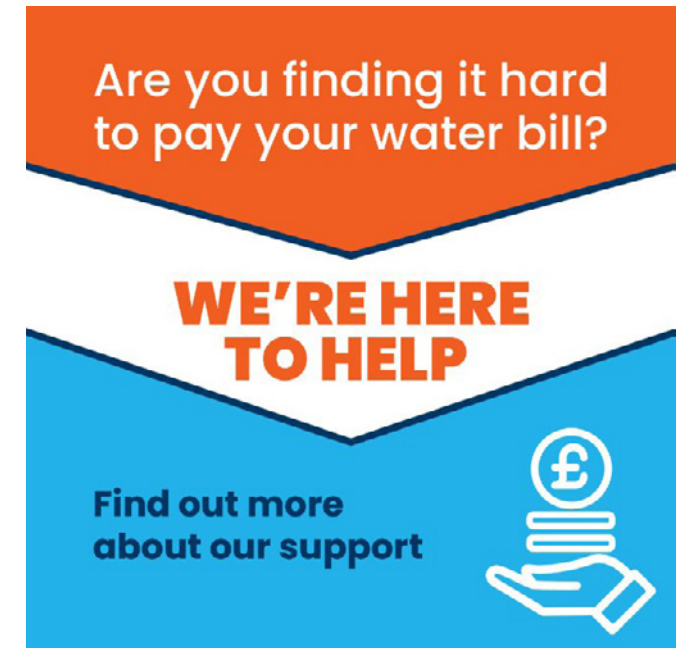
We initially focused on our discount for low-income pensioners as eligibility for that scheme is benefits related. If we know that the customer is in receipt of Pension Credit, we can automatically apply a 20% discount to their bill.

In early 2025 we started to use DWP data for WaterSure, including renewals. This removes the need for customers to reapply and allows us to identify new eligible customers auto enrolling them on to the tariff.

Promotional activities

Affordability messaging is already very prominent on bills, in billing-associated literature, and on our website and we continually promote our support via our magazine, e-news articles, and through more than 300 partners. In addition, over the last year we have promoted schemes in the following ways:

- affordability press release in conjunction with Water UK
- help to pay banner on our website
- successful targeted facebook campaign across our region using a 'we're here to help' message
- Help with Water bill adverts on Global radio across our supply area
- supported the Surviving Winter campaign see page 60 for our case study
- article in Kidney Matters magazine
- full back page of our spring magazine
- promoted affordability support to Wessex Water colleagues, their friends, and families during Talk Money Week
- refreshed social media toolkit for partners, providing them with content they can use in their social media posts
- FAQs added to our online platform, PartnerHub, encouraging partners to champion/respond where they can to social media posts
- encouraged and enabled our partners to promote our schemes through our PartnerHub post
- increased community drop-in face to face support, including attending libraries, job centres, talking cafes, Age UK groups, housing associations, warm spaces, foodbanks, and community cafes.



In early 2025 we started to use DWP data for WaterSure, including renewals.

Case studies

Case studies: Supporting customers through the cost-of-living crisis (continued)

Building new partnerships

We work with partners to raise awareness of our schemes. Here are some examples of our partnership working over the last 12 months.

- Rolled out care leavers Assist across our whole region following a successful trial with South Gloucester Council. This gives a 90% bill reduction to those leaving care and becoming bill payers for the first time.
- Continued to work with Money Wellness who offer free confidential debt advice, budgeting tips and tools, and access to financial well-being counselling. We refer our customers to them for debt advice through a web portal and with consent can receive customer data back to help us identify the right support scheme for them.
- Worked with Bristol Water to fund a partnership with Kidney Care UK who will deliver projects aimed at increasing awareness of Priority Services and WaterSure to those living with chronic kidney disease (CKD).
- Continued to work with IE Hub, a tool that allows customers to complete their income and expenditure statement online. We will receive the completed budget and be able to apply a suitable affordability scheme. If the customer needs debt advice, they will be referred to Money Wellness to complete their journey.
- Explored different projects under our Resource West Partnership such as working with Brace, Marie Curie, and advertising in hospitals.
- Held ongoing conversations with Macmillan about how we can best support customers who have an SR1 form and a life limiting condition.
- Added a Money Wellness bills increase calculator to our website.
- Contacted foodbanks to collaborate with us. We have since received requests for flyers, posters, sign ups to our newsletter and to speak with us.



- Signed up social landlords to provide independent advice and apply for schemes with tenants.
- Agreed to offer customers access to grants and support schemes via Lightning Reach. Customers can find and apply for support through a self-serve portal. We will be able to access reporting and track usage of the portal to clearly show impact and insights. Our schemes will be listed in the tool and Lightning Reach will promote our support to existing users in our region. Find and apply for financial support | [Lightning Reach](#)
- Partnered with Bristol Water, Bournemouth Water, South West Water and National Grid to trial National Support Network Find Help Fast | Resource West Group which is a signposting tool for staff and customers to find advice and help for a range of issues.

Case studies

Helping remote customers with Citizens Advice East Dorset and Purbeck's Advice Bus

As part of our response to the cost of living crisis we injected an additional £160,000 into the debt advice sector across our region to help ease capacity. Funding included requirements to support those needing help with their water bills and completing applications for our support schemes.

As part of this we chose to fund the Citizens Advice East Dorset and Purbeck's (EDP) Advice Bus. The bus aimed to provide a drop-in advice service and advertise the opportunity to come and access digital assistance locally; since it's been on the road it has helped over 3,000 residents. This has enabled Citizens Advice EDP to reach rural parts of the community and offer a holistic advice service which includes helping customers afford their water bills. The bus has been able to help customers with a variety of issues such as:

- appointments for digital form filling or to create a budget. Advisers are able to offer additional support to increase financial resilience

- further appointments for income maximisation, helping clients to claim DWP benefits as appropriate or supporting them to challenge benefit decisions to increase their income
- referring clients to specialist caseworkers, for example to apply for our Assist tariff, deal with any debt, homelessness prevention, or employment, to further support financial stability
- direct access to the Dorset Energy Unit - a team of NVQ trained energy caseworkers, who will be able to assist them with uploading documents and bills and access charitable grants online.

In May 2025 the Princess Royal, Patron of Citizens Advice, visited Citizens Advice EDP to celebrate the second birthday of its Advice Bus and highlight the importance of the initiative and positive impact it's had on the community.



In May 2025 the Princess Royal, Patron of Citizens Advice, visited Citizens Advice EDP to celebrate the second birthday of its Advice Bus



Case studies

Driving continuous improvement for those who need extra help

Proactively listening to feedback from our customers and learning from their positive and negative experience is critical to driving continuous improvement in the services we provide. By segmenting customers, we can compare the feedback from one group with another.

For example, in 2024-25 we received an average satisfaction score from customers on Priority Services of 8.80 out of 10. In addition, 89.5% said that we made it easy for them and 89.7% felt the matter was fully resolved.

This compares to an average score of 8.74 out of 10 from all other customers. Of those, 88.8% said that we made it easy, and 88.5% felt the matter was fully resolved.

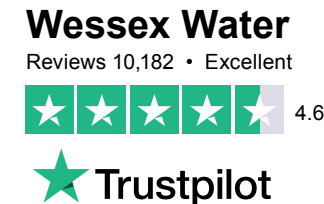
Data from our C-MeX surveys also shows that customers on our affordability schemes are generally more

satisfied with our billing service than those that aren't.

We display and share data from our internal feedback and C-MeX surveys through data dashboards (real time where we can) to identify key themes, pain points and improvements we can make to training, processes, policies, and our systems.

We also undertake detailed customer journey mapping, adopting different customer personas, including those on Priority Services and affordability schemes.

All of this insight and continuous improvement is overseen by our senior Customer Experience Group and our internal Vulnerability Advisory Panel (VAP). Vulnerability experts are best placed to ensure that improvements are made in the areas of the business that will have the biggest impact on our customers who need extra help.



"Quality and continuous improvement are of the highest importance to Wessex Water and the organisational culture is one of prioritising the customer experience. The work you do to expand your insight and constantly update your understanding of all your customers is extensive. At every opportunity you are seeking to reach those who are most disadvantaged for whatever reason of vulnerability."

Customer service excellence award report, 2023

Customer personas

Persona 1 - Janet

Janet is in her late 70s and is widowed, now living alone.

She prefers to speak to someone in person and have things responded to in writing so she knows what is happening and can show it to her son if she needs help.

Although she has an iPad, she doesn't like having to use the internet to search for information and worries about filling out online forms.

She likes to be reassured and taken care of each step of the way.

Persona 2 - James

James is in his early 30s and leads a busy professional life.

He's always on the go and prefers to use his mobile phone to communicate with companies.

He wants things to be made accessible to him so that he can self-serve, provide information digitally at any time and move on, waiting for the next update.

He hates having to chase.

Persona 3 - Dylan

Dylan is in his early 40s. He has a long-standing medical condition but makes the most of life.

He's tech-savvy and financially aware and seeks out various PSR schemes that will make his life easier.

He has a small business he can run from home but is on low income support.

He likes gadgets and has a few devices that make his life and communicating easier.

He doesn't like having to re-disclose after registering his disability.

He doesn't like using traditional communication methods.

Persona 4 - Navdeep

Navdeep is a married working mum with two children under five.

She is always busy running from pillar to post to juggle her job and family life.

When things go wrong it's important to Navdeep to get help easily.

She may use the website to find a phone number (unless she has a bill to hand) but she'd always pick up the phone to speak to a person.

She likes a clear, non-technical experience and dislikes lots of phone options and hidden numbers.

Case studies

Accessible recreational sites

During 2020-22 we carried out accessibility reviews of our sites which covered:

- how easy it is to find information on the website
- any barriers to travelling to and arriving at the site
- any issues preventing accessible access around the site within recommended standards
- information that should be included in any signage.

Since this review we have made significant improvements to our Sutton Bingham and Clatworthy reservoir sites to make them more accessible. Our most recent site improvement has been at Backwell Lakes where we delivered multiple enhancements, including a new accessible viewing platform, surfacing the carpark, improvements to the existing circular footpath, frequent benches, cycle parking, new bins and enhanced habitat management.

Visitor counters identified that the site was used by over 395,000 people in 2023. The most rewarding part of the project was receiving such positive feed-back from so many visitors; many of which came from visitors with reduced mobility. On a site visit, one person stopped us to say that the enhancements had genuinely saved their life by enabling them access to green open space.

Our aim over the next five-year period is to do further reviews and enhancements to facilities, so they are fully inclusive for all to enjoy. On our sites we are working with various organisations and charities within our region who support our customers who may need additional help using our recreation spaces.



The visitor welcome to Backwell Lake is significantly improved. Before (above) vs after (below)



Case studies

Meet Eileen and Susan

Eileen's story: Eileen is one of the many customers we've helped with their water bills. She offered to share her experience to inspire others in similar situations. Today, Eileen is free from water debt and managing her bills much better. As a single parent of four and a widow for 16 years, Eileen faced the tough task of balancing work and raising her children alone. She found herself in debt and sought independent advice before applying for help with her water bill.

We placed Eileen on a reduced bill through our Assist tariff, tailored to what she could afford. Additionally, we helped her clear her debt through our Restart scheme. Eileen paid a set amount for two years, after which we cleared her remaining water debt. Now, Eileen is debt-free and able to manage her water bill. When asked if she would recommend Wessex Water to friends and family struggling with their bills, Eileen responded: "Yes, and I already have! It made a big difference and helped me so much when I was struggling. If it makes things easier for them, then I can't see why they wouldn't."

Susan's story: We met Susan during a visit to a renal unit at a local hospital, in collaboration with Kidney Care UK, as part of a drop-in session. Susan was struggling with her bills and, due to her ill health, couldn't contact us for help. Susan is now registered for Priority Services and pays directly from her benefits towards her bill, which includes our discount for low-income pensioners. We've also enrolled her in our Restart scheme to help her become debt-free. Susan agreed to let us film her story with Kidney Care UK earlier this year to demonstrate how we can assist others in similar situations.

[Listen to Eileen's story in her own words](#)



[Listen to Susan's story in her own words](#)



Case studies

Partnership with Kidney Care UK

We are always looking for new ways to reach people who could benefit from knowing more about what we do and how we can offer support with paying water bills and Priority Services.

Bristol Water and Wessex Water joined up to form a partnership with Kidney Care UK in 2023. There are around 4,600 people in our combined supply areas who have had a kidney transplant or are on dialysis either in a hospital or at home.

As part of our partnership with Kidney Care UK we have visited various renal units across our region numerous times to meet dialysis patients and discuss affordability and Priority Services with them. Patients and staff have been amazing and made us feel so welcome. All visits have been enlightening, showing what dialysis patients go through on a day-to-day basis, and why our support is so vital. We continue to find opportunities to visit more units, supporting more customers, especially those who are on home dialysis that we don't see on our visits. See our case study on Page 56 to see how we have helped Susan on one of visits.



We have visited Southmead Hospital to meet patients and discuss affordability and Priority Services

We have formed a partnership with Kidney Care UK

Case studies

Customer research: putting our strategy to the test

No one is better placed than customers to tell us if our support services are meeting their needs. This is why we asked independent research agency, Blue Marble Research, to conduct a piece of research on our behalf.

Blue Marble convened a sample of 36 customers to participate in an in-depth interview which focused on key areas of the vulnerability strategy. Around half of the participants were already on one of our affordability schemes or receiving additional support by being on the Priority Services Register. This group could tell us if our services were meeting their needs. The other half of the sample were not currently receiving support - but Blue Marble were able to establish through their recruitment processes that they would be eligible to do so. We were particularly interested to hear the views of these customers and learn more about how we could reach them.



We learned the following from this research.

1 Participants feel that good experiences with their service providers are underpinned by the following aspects:

Staff interactions

Positive interactions with specific customer service staff are a key driver of overall customer experience

Touchpoints and channels

Participants praise service providers who enable customers to contact them through a **range of touchpoints and channels**

Outputs and resolution

All of the positive experiences that participants had with their service providers had **good resolutions**

2 However, participants feel that their service providers could provide even more for them in the following ways:

Proactive support

Many participants feel nervous, or embarrassed to reach out to service providers and ask for help, so want us to **proactively reach out to them to offer support**.

Streamlined information sharing

Participants do not want to have to **reconfirm their vulnerabilities and personal information** each time they speak with a different staff member

Additional communication channels

Many participants want to have even more ways to contact their service providers, including **after-hours calling times**, and options like **video calling for neurodivergent customers**

3 Participants told us they like the strategy, which they found very comprehensive - and were impressed (and often surprised) by the range of support services available. They found the principles of 'going the extra mile' and 'actively looking for signs of extra needs and requirements' especially important. Reassuringly, the participants who are already being supported by us felt we were delivering against these ideals with lots of praise for our staff.

Most participants feel that we already live up to these four principles in practice. They also say that they are sensible and important parts of our service offering.

We always go the extra mile

We provide an inclusive service

We are accessible for everyone



We actively look for signs of extra needs and requirements

Case studies

Customer research: putting our strategy to the test (continued)

- 4 Participants also applauded the 2030 commitments set out in the strategy – particularly our use of social tariffs to ensure ‘no one will be unable to afford their water bills.’
- 5 We also heard that customers want us to be even more ambitious with our plans to support customers in vulnerable circumstances – specifically that we could be bolder with some of our targets eg, reaching a higher number of customers eligible for a social tariff.



- 6 This research has also underlined the importance of engaging widely so that no one is missing out on help where it is needed. Participants told us we need more prominent communication of the support services available, reflecting their concern that they or others could be missing out through lack of awareness. They suggested a communications approach that includes:
 - an easy to navigate summary of all support services with signposting to more detailed information where needed
 - better targeting of information, making it as easy as possible for the people most in need to get in touch or apply for help
 - providing regular updates on services available so that no one is missing out because they are not aware of the support on offer.To an extent, participants felt we do this already, but that we need to be deliver more consistent and concerted communications about our service to bolster awareness.

As a result of this research we have:

- added information on bogus caller protection to our strategy
- amended wording around support offered to parents of young children (from 12 months to five years) and changed our work stream ‘Improving the customer journey’ to ‘Improving the customer experience’
- increased our target for raising awareness of both Priority Services and affordability support and made the wording of some of our commitments and aims much clearer
- added an initiative to work with supermarkets and hospitals
- reviewed our Priority Services web pages and added a customer facing summary of our strategy to improve communication about the support we offer
- produced a leaflet with our stakeholder Vulnerability Advisory Panel aimed at those wanting a general overview of the strategy.

Find the [full research report](#) on our website.

“It’s encouraging - they have a strategy in place. I didn’t realise as a company that they got all these things in the background. It’s helped me understand them a bit better.”

Case studies

Supporting care leavers with their bills

During National Care Leavers Week (28 October - 3 November 2024), we announced the region-wide rollout of a new incentive to support care leavers with their bills. Starting from 1 November 2024, care leavers living independently for the first time can receive an automatic 90% discount on their water and sewerage bills up to the age of 21.

After a successful trial of the scheme in partnership with South Gloucestershire Council and Bristol Water, we teamed up with local councils across the south west to provide further support to care leavers.

Coming out of the care system and living independently for the first time can be very daunting and challenging. No young person in that position should have to struggle financially too, so we hope this discount on their water bills will be helpful.

With our help-to-pay schemes, we can make sure that those accessing this discount can continue to receive help after their 21st birthday.

Care leavers can access the scheme via their care leaver team at the council, and it is also now live on the care leavers app.

We are a signatory of the Care Leavers Covenant, demonstrating our commitment to being part of the extended network supporting care leavers in England.

[A 90% reduction in water and sewerage bills for eligible care leavers - Care Leaver Covenant](#)



Watermark towns

We are collaborating with local councils to help communities save water and improve the environment. In 2025, we will work with Devizes, Calne, Warminster, Dorchester and Taunton town councils to provide social tariff and customer support training for organisations in these towns. For more information on Watermark Towns visit [Become a Watermark Town | Wessex Water](#)

Signposting support for customers in need

We've teamed up with the National Support Network (NSN) to go further in supporting our customers in need, alongside National Grid, Bristol Water, Bournemouth Water and South West Water.

The NSN is a one-stop support hub designed to help those who may be struggling to find help for life's challenges quickly and anonymously.

The hub is a directory of national support services operated and maintained by the NSN, for our teams to signpost customers to. The service includes helplines and support for issues such as bereavement, insomnia, mental health, communication needs and many more.

When dealing with a customer who mentions they might be struggling with a situation or have specific needs our teams can search for relevant support or provide the link so they can browse in their own time.

The link can also be used by our own staff to find help too- <https://rwg.nsn.org.uk>.



Support for the Surviving Winter campaign

Due to the winter fuel allowance changes, we believe it's more important than ever to support pensioners.

We have actively promoted our discount for low-income pensioners and encourage pensioners to sign up for Pension Credit. Banners were put on our website, and we increased social media activity.

We are also supporting the Surviving Winter campaign across our region in partnership with community foundations. We will promote the campaign in our magazine and donate funds in each area.

For many years the community foundation network has been working to save lives over the winter months by providing emergency fuel grants and other forms of support, such as practical advice, food, blankets and hot water bottles.

dorsetcommunityfoundation.org/appeals/surviving-winter
somersectcf.org.uk/winter
quartetcf.org.uk/fund/surviving-winter
wiltshirecf.org.uk/about/surviving-winter



Case studies

Supporting customers in person

In June 2024, we launched new regular day-time drop-in sessions for customers to access face-to-face contact with a customer adviser at a range of locations across our water supply region.

We considered how best to reach a wide range of customers at specific locations in local communities. Our regular outreach sessions provided a point of contact for local communities and supported our existing outreach activities, like our free education service, community funding, volunteering and local events.

Customers can book online for a dedicated time to meet an adviser or drop in during the open session times. We also worked with a wide range of existing support organisations who were able to refer customers for additional advice.

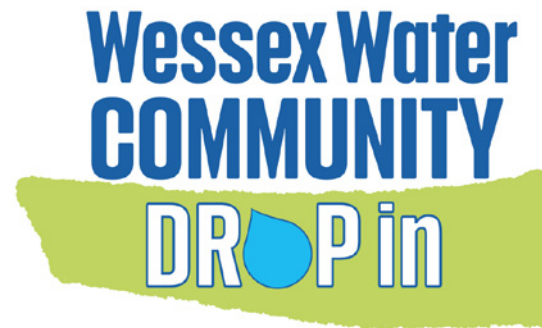


We helped customers with enquiries about bills, gave advice on what help is available if they were struggling to pay or referred them to additional debt advice support. We also gave advice on saving water, information about local water quality and the environment, and about blockages, plumbing and drainage.

We visited over 30 different locations, with a core of 16 towns we now regularly visit every two months. In 2025, we are expanding this service in partnership with Bristol Water and Bournemouth Water with a new adviser to cover our wastewater supply area as well.

Our core locations for 2025

The locations at which we will be holding our sessions are pinned on the map:



Find out more about how our service works in the video below, and on our website at:

[Community Drop-Ins | Wessex Water](#)



Appendix I

Vulnerability strategy development timeline

Governance and challenge	
Vulnerability Advisory Panel (VAP)	Customer Challenge Group (CCG)
The panel consists of stakeholder experts representing consumer bodies, government departments and CCW. The Panel supports, advises, and challenges our vulnerability strategy to make sure we are fulfilling our commitment to support and reach all our customers who need extra help and more recently that we comply with Ofwat's Service for all, Priority Service Register standards and Paying fair guidance.	An independent body that plays a key role in representing the interests and needs of Wessex Water's customers and provides advice and challenge on policy areas such as customer service, customer engagement, affordability, wider vulnerability, and tariffs. The co-chairs of the VAP are members of the CCG to provide a direct link between the two.

Continuous customer feedback on our services
Daily

Customer Insight		
Customer image tracker	Online panel: 'Have Your Say' customer survey and newsletter	Bespoke customer research
We continuously explore the views of 2,000 customers throughout each year gathering insight through interviews to understand perceived levels of satisfaction, sentiment, trust, and performance with Wessex Water as well as customers' values and priorities. We track how customers are feeling about their financial situation and affording their water bills and their awareness of both our affordability support schemes and Priority Services. Results are analysed using six customer segments that highlight cost concerns.	Running since 2013, registered customers are regularly invited to share their views to tell us what they think of our services, how they feel we could improve, and to help us plan for the future. Customers complete online surveys on a range of topics including customer priorities and social tariffs. A newsletter is published to share findings and changes we're making as a result and to signpost customers to relevant information. The panel is also used as a separate sample in research projects to inform business plans. Find more information about our panel and how to join on our website.	Specific research projects to inform this strategy or our services for those who need extra help. Find out more about these research materials and detailed findings on our website.

We continuously explore the views of 2,000 customers throughout each year



Timeline and key milestones for developing this strategy	
2005/06	
Worked with debt advice agencies to carry out holistic assessments and determine ability to pay of customer struggling with their bills and debt. Funding of debt advice agencies commenced.	
2007	
February	Annual debt advice partner workshop: Workshops with all funded debt advice partners to discuss operation of our support schemes including any changes, ideas for improvement, funding and partnership working.
April	Launched low-rate tariff, Assist following extensive engagement with debt advice partners on operation of the tariff
2008	
February	Annual funded debt advice partner workshops: Workshops with all funded debt advice partners to discuss operation of our support schemes including any changes, ideas for improvement, funding and partnership working.
2009	
February	Annual funded debt advice partner workshops: Workshops with all funded debt advice partners to discuss operation of our support schemes including any changes, ideas for improvement, funding and partnership working.
2010	
February	Annual funded debt advice partner workshops: Workshops with all funded debt advice partners to discuss operation of our support schemes including any changes, ideas for improvement, funding and partnership working.
2011	
February	Annual funded debt advice partner workshops: Workshops with all funded debt advice partners to discuss operation of our support schemes including any changes, ideas for improvement, funding and partnership working.
July	Eligibility criteria for social tariffs research: Stakeholder workshop and 14 focus group discussions to understand attitudes to social tariffs and the key eligibility criteria. Changes to the Assist tariff developed ready for quantitative testing.
2012	
February	Annual funded debt advice partner workshops: Workshops with all funded debt advice partners to discuss operation of our support schemes including any changes, ideas for improvement, funding and partnership working.
October	Cross-subsidy social tariff acceptability research: Telephone survey of 400 domestic customers to understand attitudes and acceptability of our social tariff proposals and the willingness to pay extra to fund them. Although most customers do not support the principle of cross subsidy and the idea that customers should fund social tariffs, three quarters of customers were willing to accept the small, proposed bill increase of 50p per year. On balance, customers agreed with the qualifying criteria for Assist but were divided on the proposals to lower the WaterSure cap from the average domestic bill to the average metered bill.

2013	
February	Annual funded debt advice partner workshops: Workshops with all funded debt advice partners to discuss operation of our support schemes including any changes, ideas for improvement, funding and partnership working.
April	Re-launched Assist tariff with amended eligibility criteria: Tariff relaunched. Eligibility widened to anyone who couldn't afford to pay their bill such as those in low paid work. Tariff no longer limited to those on benefits.
April	Launched Watersure Plus WaterSure Plus introduced enhancing the current WaterSure government-led scheme. Bill cap set in line with the average metered bill (more information on page 69).
October	Affordability Advisory Group established: Group set up to oversee our affordability support and identify ways to improve uptake. Key role to monitor and agree the level of cross subsidy. The group agreed that our Assist tariff and wider TAP offering are best in class. Group to meet annually in June/July.
2014	
February	Annual funded debt advice partner workshops: Workshops with all funded debt advice partners to discuss operation of our support schemes including any changes, ideas for improvement, funding and partnership working.
July	Affordability Advisory Group meeting
2015	
February	Annual funded debt advice partner workshops: Workshops with all funded debt advice partners to discuss operation of our support schemes including any changes, ideas for improvement, funding and partnership working.
July	Affordability Advisory Group meeting
November	Social tariff acceptability research: Following a proposal from the Affordability Advisory Group, a survey of 433 customers is conducted to understand attitudes to the proposal to offer low-income pensioners a discount of 20% on their water bills, and to measure the acceptability of the anticipated cross subsidy. Just under 60% find the pension credit social tariff acceptable. Over half of customers, in principle, would find a bill increase of between £4-£6 acceptable to fund the cross subsidy.
2016	
February	Annual funded debt advice partner workshops Workshops with all funded debt advice partners to discuss operation of our support schemes including any changes, ideas for improvement, funding and partnership working.
April	Pension credit discount scheme for low-income pensioners launched
July	People in vulnerable circumstances research: 1-2-1 discussions with 10 stakeholder organisations providing services to potentially vulnerable customers, ie, debt advice, housing associations, elderly and mental health support. Organisations happy to engage and find a way to support us in our business plan research and engagement activities. Principles developed for engaging with people in vulnerable circumstances over the course of the research for the business plan.
July	Affordability Advisory Group meeting

2017	
February	Annual funded debt advice partner workshops: Workshops with all funded debt advice partners to discuss operation of our support schemes including any changes, ideas for improvement, funding and partnership working.
June	Affordability Advisory Group meeting
August	Published first 'supporting customers in vulnerable circumstances' policy
2018	
February	Stakeholder survey with advice agencies and follow-up workshops: Online partner surveys to seek feedback on the value and effectiveness of our partnerships, support for customers in vulnerable circumstances and ideas for improvement to our partnerships and customer offering. 27 responses received showing overwhelmingly positive feedback with 95% happy with the way we work with them including accessibility of our staff and our offering for customers in vulnerable circumstances. Findings presented at annual workshops with the advice agencies to co-create improvements to our vulnerability strategy subsequently known as Every Customer Matters.
March	Evaluating Priority Services research: 20 in-home, paired in-depth interviews with vulnerable customers to evaluate Priority Services, half registered for the scheme and half not registered but eligible, plus a 90-minute group discussion with four vulnerable customers living in an area recently affected by a water supply interruption. Overall, strong endorsement for the scheme, noting a range of recommendations to further enhance it, drive awareness and increase uptake. Ideas fed into development of vulnerability strategy.
April	Launched Assist for organisations: Scheme enabling not-for-profit organisations to pass bill discounts on to vulnerable young adults (more information on page 69).
July	Affordability Advisory Group review strategy for customers in vulnerable circumstances ready for submission as part of the 2020-25 business plan.
September	Every Customer Matters strategy first published
2019	
February	Annual funded debt advice partner workshop: Workshops with all funded debt advice partners to discuss operation of our support schemes including any changes, ideas for improvement, funding and partnership working.
May	Joint event with Scottish and Southern Electricity networks: To raise awareness of Priority Services with multiple common partners and encourage them to sign up to work with us.
July	Affordability Advisory Group agreed to extend their remit from just financial vulnerability to all aspects of vulnerability. Agreed to recruit new members
October	Published updated Every Customer Matters strategy and performance report

2020	
February	Annual funded debt advice partner workshop: Workshops with all funded debt advice partners to discuss operation of our support schemes including any changes, ideas for improvement, funding and partnership working.
July	Affordability Advisory Group re launched as Vulnerability Advisory Panel: New remit agreed and members to support the reporting of vulnerability performance linked to business plan commitments.
September	Co-creative research: to increase uptake of pension credit discount: Co-creative research workshops with 10 eligible pensioners (not in receipt of pension credit tariff) to understand how we can increase uptake and explore new messaging that could be used across customer communications. Research resulted in a name change to 'Discount for Low-Income Pensioners', a simplified application process, and changes to promotional messaging.
September	Published updated Every Customer Matters strategy and performance report
November	Launched Covid Assist: Working with our debt advice partners we co-created Covid Assist. The tariff provided temporary support to customers directly financially affected by the pandemic to help them get back on track, retain a habit of paying and avoid building up unnecessary debt (more information on page 69).
2021	
February	Annual funded debt advice partner workshop: Workshops with all funded debt advice partners to discuss operation of our support schemes including any changes, ideas for improvement, funding and partnership working.
March	Joint event with National Grid and Bristol Water: To raise awareness of Priority Services with multiple common partners and encourage them to sign up to work with us.
July	Vulnerability Advisory Panel strengthens link with our Customer Challenge Group (CCG): Provides additional challenge on vulnerability and affordability. Co-chairs appointed for VAP from CCG.
September	Water bill accessibility testing with Scope: Scope experts review our customer bills to improve accessibility and customer experience with several recommendations implemented (see case study on page 47).
September	Published updated Every Customer Matters strategy and performance report
2022	
February	Support schemes pilot: Two-stage research to firstly understand customers' lived experiences and the current application processes through desk-based reviews, in-depth customer interviews, multiple group discussions with 38 eligible customers not currently on support schemes, and individual in-depth interviews with a range of stakeholders. Building on this, stage two involved a co-creation workshop with Wessex Water customers, staff, and stakeholders to design a simple application process (see case study on page 50).
February	Annual funded debt advice partner workshop: Workshops with all funded debt advice partners to discuss operation of our support schemes including any changes, ideas for improvement, funding and partnership working.
June	Vulnerability Advisory Panel increases frequency of meetings following increased link with Customer Challenge Group
September	Water bill accessibility testing with Scope: Partnership working to test water bills accessibility through in-depth user interviews with adults with low vision or sight impairments, and with neurodivergent adults and/or those with mental health challenges (see case study on page 47).

2022 continued	
September	Published updated Every Customer Matters strategy and performance report
December	Vulnerability Advisory Panel meeting
2023	
February	Annual funded debt advice partner workshop: Workshops with all funded debt advice partners to discuss operation of our support schemes including any changes, ideas for improvement, funding and partnership working.
July	Vulnerability Advisory Panel meeting
September	Affordability and acceptability testing of the business plan: 96 customer interviews and 2,373 customer surveys revealed that despite the cost-of-living crisis, only a minority (10%) of customers find it difficult to afford their current water and sewerage bill. However, for the proposed future bills, the proportion who will find it difficult to afford jumps to more than 4 in 10. Customers were surprised by the extent of the bill increases. Overall, 63% of customers accept the proposed plans. Lack of acceptance of the plans for PR24 revolves around the (linked) issues of the cost of the plan and a (growing) sense that water companies' profits are too high, and that they should be paying for more of the investments.
September	Published updated Every Customer Matters strategy and performance report
December	Vulnerability Advisory Panel meeting
2024	
February	Funded debt advice partner workshop & partner survey: Joint workshops with Bristol Water, Bournemouth Water and South West Water. Sessions were well attended with partners very engaged and positive about our relationship. Group discussions focus on our Every Customer Matters strategy, covering topics such as bill increases, cost-of-living, and water company performance. Following the workshop, we invited approximately 200 partners to also share feedback on our strategy. Overall, positive feedback and suggestions received, with our partners happy with our approach and feeling that it is very comprehensive.
April	Vulnerability Advisory Panel makes changes to meeting frequency and format to better align with annual reporting and review of our vulnerability strategy.
May	Research to test the vulnerability strategy with customers: 36 in-depth interviews were conducted with a range of customers who need extra help for varying needs. Some customers were already on PSR and some were eligible but not yet on the scheme. The range of support available to customers outlined in our strategy, as well as the principles, workstreams, and service area promises, are seen as impressive, comprehensive, and achievable. Customers feel these aspects highlight the level of thought put into the strategy, and many feel that we are already living up to much of the strategy in practice. The 2030 commitments (including the Priority Service Register commitments) are seen as important goals, with most customers viewing these as achievable and appropriate. Overall, our strategy is well-received (see case study on pages 58-59).
June	Vulnerability Advisory Panel meeting to review and sign off vulnerability strategy for submission to Ofwat

2024 continued	
June	Lived Experience research in collaboration with Bristol Water and National Grid: Conducted an online survey with 1936 customers on our Priority Services Register asking their feedback and comments on service satisfaction, affordability, supply interruptions, our websites and data sharing. Most customers happy with the services provided by all three companies and how we deal in with them in an incident. Website feedback was generally positive but lack of awareness that we share data between us.
October	Customer segmentation research: We updated our customer segmentation framework as we recognised that over the past five years there has been a wide range of social change and influences on customer behaviours and attitudes. Through quantitative surveys (1,053 responses) and 10 qualitative focus groups, we identified six persona profiles based on core demographics, affordability perceptions, environmental and water related attitudes and behaviours. These customer insights enable us to continue to effectively tailor communications and engagement approaches to ensure our services meet the needs of our diverse customer base (full report).
November	Students from across the region attended our annual Young People's Panel: Twenty eight students participated in a range of interactive activities that explored how we communicate with customers who may need extra help during incidents, and developed approaches for how to ensure all customers can benefit from our smart meter rollout programme. Future customers highlighted a range of communication approaches, financial support, education, and additional resources and considerations that they think would help to support customers with additional needs. We are pleased that many of these recommendations are already in place and align with our approach for supporting customers who may need extra help (full report).
November	Vulnerability Advisory Panel meeting
2025	
February	Stakeholder VAP affordability sub-group meeting: The meeting provided a comprehensive examination of water affordability, particularly in light of Ofwat's PR24 Final Determination. Discussions focused on how projected bill increases would affect different customer groups, the current effectiveness of support schemes such as social tariffs, and whether these mechanisms are sufficient to prevent water poverty. Updated estimates of water poverty were reviewed, along with analysis of how its incidence varies across customer types. A key concern raised was the persistence of water poverty among some households despite being enrolled in support schemes. As a result, the group identified a need for deeper insight into the scale and nature of water poverty. This included understanding the absolute number of affected households, the characteristics of those most at risk, such as family composition, housing tenure, age, and benefit status, and the extent of 'deep' water poverty, defined by high bill-to-income ratios. These areas were highlighted as priorities for further investigation to inform future affordability strategies.
February	Funded debt advice partner workshop and partner survey: Joint workshops with Bristol Water, Bournemouth Water and South West Water. Sessions were well attended, with partners very engaged and positive about our relationship. Group discussions covered topics such as bill increases, cost-of-living, and Smart Metering

Appendix II

The success of TAP

Reduced bill - Assist

Assist was our first main social tariff and the first in the water industry. It was introduced in 2007 as a 'win-win' tariff because at that time cross subsidies for social tariffs were not allowed. Eligibility was restricted to customers in receipt of means tested benefits.

Following social tariff legislation and extensive customer and stakeholder consultation into both eligibility and customer support for any associated cross subsidy, eligibility was reassessed. In April 2013 Assist was opened to customers in low paid work, so in effect anyone who cannot afford to pay their bill could apply for the tariff.

Assist has six bands, and the customer is placed on the band closest to their ability to pay. Bill discounts are up to 90%. The average bill reduction for customers on the Assist tariff is around £290, while these customers continue to contribute on average £50 more than they did before, which is more than the cost of administering the tariff.

Bill cap scheme - WaterSure

In April 2013 we introduced WaterSure Plus. Eligibility criteria for WaterSure are set by government but we enhanced our scheme by reducing the annual bill to bring it in line with the average metered bill rather than the average domestic bill.

Discount for low income pensioners

In April 2016 following further consultation with our customers and stakeholders we introduced our Pension Credit Discount offering low income pensioners, the 'just about managing', up to 20% off their bills. Our Affordability Advisory Group was fundamental to the introduction of this discount having seen the low numbers of pensioners on our affordability schemes at that point in time. Eligibility for this discount is linked entirely to receipt of Pension Credit or where state

pension is the only income. The average bill reduction is around £55.

In 2020 we commissioned research with pensioners and charity partners to identify barriers to take up of the discount and ways we could improve accessibility. This led to the change in name, simplification of the application process and changes to promotional messaging.

Assist for organisations

In April 2018 we introduced 'Assist for organisations' having been approached by a charity that houses younger adults moving out of the care system. Assist is now available to those not-for-profit organisations so they can pass bill discounts on to these young adults who need extra help.

Debt Support Scheme - Restart

In addition, we offer customers help to repay their debt and get back on track through our Restart programme. Restart rewards the customer for paying their bill and importantly leads to a change in behaviour. In year one the customer pays their current year charges and any notional contribution towards their debt and we write off an equivalent amount. In year two the customer again pays their current year charges plus any notional amount towards their debt and then we clear the remaining balance, however large. At the end of the two years the customer is back on track with more than 89% continuing to engage and pay their ongoing water charges.

Payment breaks, flexible payment plans and Water Direct - using benefits payments

For those who just need a short-term solution we have a range of flexible payment plans or the offer of a payment break. This has been particularly useful as a stop gap for customers applying for benefits who will then move on to a low-rate tariff or for those waiting for Universal Credit to be awarded. We also continue to offer Water Direct.

Water-metering and Home Check

Some customers simply find a water meter can lead to a more manageable bill. To encourage switching to a meter, we are the first company to introduce a cash back guarantee for our customers, designed by our Young

People's Panel. For metered customers, we also offer a Home Check service to help them reduce their water and energy use.

Covid Assist

In 2020, we worked with our debt advice partners and expert advisers to co-create Covid Assist. The tariff provided temporary support to customers directly affected financially by the pandemic helping them get back on track, retain a habit of paying and avoid building up unnecessary debt. It also made sure we refer the right customers to our debt advice partners at the right time. Intelligent triaging fast tracked bill discounts of up to 90% to eligible customers for six months after which they could apply for our standard Assist tariff for longer term support.

Cost of living crisis

Due to the cost of living crisis we adapted Assist further to make it easier for customers to access lower water bills and give the debt advice sector longer to carry out a holistic assessment of their ability to pay.

At the first point of contact we will immediately put customers on Assist Level 4 (around 50% bill reduction). Customers will still be asked to seek independent advice. If they don't seek advice and complete an application for help (including a standard financial statement) within a year, we will revert them to standard charges. If the assessment shows the customer needs a larger discount, their Assist level will be adjusted and backdated.

Care leavers Assist

Working with South Gloucestershire Council we introduced care leavers Assist. This gives a 90% bill reduction to young people leaving care and becoming bill payers for the first time. In November 2024 this was rolled out to all councils across our region.

IE Hub

In May 2024, we introduced IE Hub, a digital Income and Expenditure tool, to our website. It enables customers to complete a self-serve digital journey if they need help with their water bills but do not need debt advice.

Compliance with Service for All

No.	Minimum expectation	Compliance	Implementation	Monitoring	Challenges	Targets
1.1	Companies should adapt their services to customers in line with any known extra help needs. This is especially important during times where there is increased risk of harm; for example, during incidents.	Exceeding	<p>Co-design and development of the strategy – page 10 and Appendix I</p> <p>Continuous improvement – pages 10 and 58</p> <p>What you can expect from us if you need extra help – pages 15-24</p> <p>Extra help during an incident – page 27, Endorsement – page 30</p> <p>Initiatives – pages 32-45</p> <p>In summary, we have designed and deliver flexible, tailored additional services to meet the widest possible range of customers’ needs now and into the future through Priority Services and our Tailored Assistance Programme (TAP), co-designed and endorsed by organisations and stakeholders representing customers who need extra help. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contacting customers to check if they need bottled water delivered during an unplanned break in the water supply. • Scheduling planned water supply interruptions around the customer’s treatment needs. • Providing wider support during extended water outages or property damage due to flooding, including engaging third parties and arranging evacuation if needed. • Supporting customers experiencing sewer flooding. • Signposting to support services via National Support Network. • Communicating with customers using their preferred contact method and providing written materials in accessible formats such as braille, large print, or translated versions. Ensuring all communication is jargon-free and in plain English. • Offering multiple contact options, including Live Chat, a dedicated language line, sign language translation, and Text Relay. • Using a knock-and-wait or password service when visiting customers at home. • Taking additional meter readings and offering free meter relocation if a customer has difficulty accessing or reading their meter. • Liaising with a nominated contact such as a carer, friend, or family member on the customer’s behalf. Encouraging the setting up of Power of Attorney and providing guidance on our website. <p>These services are aligned with the ‘Needs and Services’ element of the PSR standards, ensuring each customer’s specific circumstances are matched with appropriate and consistent support. Customers may need one or more of these standard services depending on their specific circumstances and we recognise that they may fall into more than one group.</p> <p>We provide extensive support during any incidents such as an unexpected break in the water supply. Our Customer Care Team will contact customers (or their nominated contact) on Priority Services to let them know, find out if they need bottled water or any additional extra help, and continue to keep in touch with them throughout the incident. We use a priority rating to contact those most at risk of harm first. We also have a dedicated incidents guidance page on our website which provides essential information such as how we will keep customers updated, their bottled water rights, and entitlement to compensation. The page also provides advice on how to prepare for a potential service disruption or emergency.</p> <p>We operate a fast, warm voice answering service and all call agents are highly trained to support customers on Priority Services or identify customers who need extra help. In general, target times for dealing with issues at individual properties are the same for all customers but we always take individual circumstances into account. In some cases, our policies explicitly provide additional support for customers on Priority Services. For example, we offer a free leak repair on customers’ own supply pipes with eligibility linked to pipe length. If a customer is not eligible, we will still fix their leak for free if they are on Priority Services or one of our social tariffs.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask customers on Priority Services if they are satisfied with our service, including during incidents, and if their needs have been met using day-to-day tailored feedback surveys. This is in place for operational customer contact and post event surveys. Billing surveys will follow once our new billing system is implemented in 2026. 2. Proactively gather other feedback from our customers and learn from their positive and negative experiences. This will include Trust Pilot reviews, bespoke research projects, and root cause analysis of contacts and complaints. We will compare feedback from customers on Priority Services with feedback from all customers. 3. Undertake detailed customer journey mapping, including incidents, adopting different customer personas. 4. Measure the number of customers on Priority Services that our Customer Care Team attempts to contact during an incident as a proportion of the total number of customers on Priority Services that are affected. 5. Continue to use insight from stakeholders, organisations, charities and partners to co-design the extra help we will give to our customers and increase the number of organisations willing to endorse our strategy. 6. Introduce new priority contact for PSR customers during incidents. 	<p>Future Challenges:</p> <p>Provision of services at scale</p> <p>As the number of customers on Priority Services grows, the Data Checking, process, communication and alternative water supply provision during larger scale incidents are becoming increasingly resource intensive. Ensuring timely and effective contact with all registered customers is a growing challenge.</p> <p>Ongoing system development</p> <p>Enhancing customer support may be constrained by legacy system limitations. We are implementing a new billing system in the next couple of years.</p>	<p>90% of customers on Priority Services are satisfied with our service</p> <p>90% of customers on Priority Services say their needs are met</p> <p>Attempt to contact 100% Priority Services customers with available contact details during an incident to check if they need bottled water or additional support</p>

No.	Minimum expectation	Compliance	Implementation	Monitoring	Challenges	Targets
1.2	Companies should ensure that the level and nature of support available to customers is presented in a way customers can understand.	Exceeding	<p>Accessible services – page 8 Co-design and development of the strategy – page 10 and Appendix I Going the extra mile - page 8 Our promise to customers who are not satisfied with the provision of extra help - pages 25-27 Extra help during an incident - page 27 Warm welcome – page 29 Case studies – pages 51-61</p> <p>In summary, we are committed to making our services accessible for everyone. Information on the services we provide through Priority Services is published in a variety of formats and through a variety of media, such as on bills, in dedicated leaflets, our website, and social media. We promote Priority Services via our wide range of partners. We have a dedicated website for partners https://partnerhub.wessexwater.co.uk</p> <p>Once registered for Priority Services, our customers will receive a welcome letter or email to confirm we have added them to our register. This is in line with the Priority Service Register standards ‘registration’ focus area. We will also let them know what is included once signing up and the benefits of being on the register, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • giving extra support during an emergency such as a break in the water supply including details of how we will communicate with them and what they can expect throughout • waiting for them to answer the door if they need a little more time if we need to visit their property • getting in touch with them using their chosen method of communication or through their nominated contact • giving advice on how they can prepare for an emergency and any ways they can prevent issues happening in their home, such as burst pipes or sewer flooding • if they find it hard to read their meter in its current location, we can see if we can move it or read the meter up to four times a year at their request • where we can, plan our works and make consideration to streetworks being carried out around their needs including any treatment they may be receiving at home • if they have an evacuation plan in place for emergency situations, we can support with this and liaise with any third-parties such as the NHS. <p>Through Priority Services we provide additional methods of communication such as Relay UK text service, an interpreter through language line, and a nominee service. During any emergency, such as a break in the water supply, our Customer Care Team support customers throughout, whatever their chosen method of contact. We also have a dedicated incidents page on our website.</p> <p>We design and test services with customers in mind and utilise our new online lived experience panel to test our products, communication and services. We take account of the guidance of organisations on the accessibility of the information we provide and have worked with the Money Advice Trust, disability charity Scope, the Business Disability Forum, Wiltshire Mind, Quids In and the Shaw Trust to review our bills, leaflets, and website. Case studies are included in the strategy. We have improved the accessibility of our own sites, maximising the potential of green spaces.</p> <p>We make it easy for customers who are not satisfied with the extra help provided to contact us and seek redress. We offer a range of accessible contact channels and a simple three stage complaints handling procedure, CCW being stage three, for instances when our service has not met expectations. Our staff are trained to go the extra mile, and empowered to do what is right for our customers. If our service falls short, we proactively tell the customer and guide them on how to seek redress.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use external accreditations to ensure our services are meeting the needs of our customers and are considered best practice. This will include the British Standard for Inclusive Service Provision, BS18477, the new ISO 22458:2022 Consumer Vulnerability and the Customer Service Excellence award which we have held since 1996. 2. Continue to work with the Shaw Trust to improve our digital accessibility. 3. Proactively gather feedback from our customers and learn from their positive and negative experiences. This will include day to day feedback surveys, Trust Pilot reviews, bespoke research projects and root cause analysis of contacts and complaints. We will compare feedback from customers on Priority Services with feedback from all customers. 4. Undertake detailed customer journey mapping, including incidents, adopting different customer personas. 5. Continue to use insight from stakeholders, organisations and partners to co-design the extra help we will give to our customers and increase the number of organisations willing to endorse our strategy. 6. Utilise our new online lived experience panel to test our products, communication and services. 	<p>Future Challenges:</p> <p>Training and workforce readiness Keeping staff training up to date and relevant is essential. Ongoing development of our training will ensure our teams are equipped to manage new technologies and meet evolving customer expectations with confidence and care.</p> <p>Evolving customer, stakeholder and regulator expectations What is considered good practice today may not meet expectations tomorrow. We must remain agile and responsive to changing needs, ensuring our services continue to meet high standards and regulatory guidance.</p> <p>Societal shifts and economic pressures Rising living costs and a changing global landscape may affect customer wellbeing (financial or non-financial), including mental health. These factors must continue to be considered in how we design and deliver inclusive services.</p>	<p>Achieve ISO 22458:2022 Consumer vulnerability by 2030</p> <p>Maintain the Customer Service Excellence award</p> <p>Comply with WCAG 2.2 AA</p>

No.	Minimum expectation	Compliance	Implementation	Monitoring	Challenges	Targets
1.3	Companies should seek to continuously improve the service they provide to customers who need extra help. This may include finding innovative ways to design or implement services.	Exceeding	<p>Stakeholder Vulnerability Advisory Panel – page 7 Co-design and development of the strategy – page 10 and Appendix I Endorsement – page 30 Four workstreams – page 31 Partnerships – pages 46-49 Continuous improvement – page 10 Initiatives – pages 32-45 Case study – page 54 A Commitment to Innovation and Inclusivity – Appendix IV</p> <p>In summary, we have had a vulnerability strategy in place since 2018 and year on year it has evolved to meet changing needs and expectations. Appendix IV highlights our commitment to innovation and inclusivity now and into the future.</p> <p>We have four very well established workstreams, with a wealth of innovative initiatives in each, to maximise awareness, increase uptake of the extra help we provide and improve the customer experience. All initiatives, past, present, and future are mapped to the Service for all guidance. Each year we have used case studies to showcase our work. Previous versions of this strategy can be found on our website https://corporate.wessexwater.co.uk/document-library</p> <p>We hold several external accreditations, including the British Standard for Inclusive Service Provision and the Customer Service Excellence award, and we regularly benchmark our service within and outside the industry. We are a member of several local and national vulnerability forums, allowing us to champion the needs of our water customers and identify best practice and new ideas.</p> <p>We use feedback from customers, partners, organisations, and stakeholders to drive continuous improvement. Our service offering and overall strategy has been co-designed and endorsed by organisations representing customers who need extra help, and our overall approach overseen by our Stakeholder Vulnerability Advisory Panel.</p> <p>Proactively listening to feedback from our customers and learning from their positive and negative experiences is critical. By segmenting customers, we compare the feedback from one group with another. Detailed customer journey mapping and analysing internal and external satisfaction survey data in real-time where we can, allows us to identify key themes, pain points, and improvements we can make to training, processes, policies, and our systems.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask customers on Priority Services if they are satisfied with our service, including during incidents, and if their needs have been met using day-to-day tailored feedback surveys. This is in place for operational customer contact and post event surveys. Billing surveys will follow once our new billing system is implemented in 2026. 2. Proactively gather feedback from our customers and learn from their positive and negative experiences. This will include day to day feedback surveys, Trust Pilot reviews, bespoke research projects and root cause analysis of contacts and complaints. We will compare feedback from customers on Priority Services with feedback from all customers. 3. Use external accreditations to ensure our services are meeting the needs of our customers and are considered best practice. This will include the British Standard for Inclusive Service Provision, BS18477, the new ISO 22458:2022 Consumer Vulnerability and the Customer Service Excellence award which we have held since 1996. 4. Undertake detailed customer journey mapping, adopting different customer personas. 5. Utilise our new online lived experience panel to test our products, communication and services 6. Introduce a satisfaction survey to seek the views of our 300 plus partners. 7. Continue to involve customers, partners, organisations and stakeholders in the co-creation of our services and this strategy as a whole. It will continue to be overseen by our Stakeholder Vulnerability Advisory Panel. 	<p>Future Challenges:</p> <p>Ongoing system development</p> <p>Enhancing customer support may be constrained by legacy system limitations. We are implementing a new billing system in the next couple of years.</p>	<p>90% of customers on Priority Services are satisfied with our service</p> <p>90% of customers on Priority Services say their needs are met</p> <p>Achieve ISO 22458:2022 Consumer vulnerability by 2030</p> <p>Maintain the Customer Service Excellence award</p> <p>>85% of our partners are satisfied with our service</p>

No.	Minimum expectation	Compliance	Implementation	Monitoring	Challenges	Targets
1.4	Companies should use a range of data to monitor the effectiveness of their extra help services, and the satisfaction levels of customers who have made such needs known.	Exceeding	<p>Stakeholder Vulnerability Advisory Panel – page 7 Co-design and development of the strategy – page 10 and Appendix I Continuous improvement – page 10 Endorsement – page 30 Partnerships – pages 46-49 Case study – page 54</p> <p>In summary, we use data to monitor the effectiveness of our strategy and customer satisfaction in a variety of ways. Proactively listening to feedback from our customers and learning from their positive and negative experiences is critical. By segmenting customers, we compare the feedback from one group with another. Detailed customer journey mapping and analysing internal and external satisfaction survey data in real-time where we can, allows us to identify key themes, pain points, and improvements to training, processes, policies, and our systems. We use contact and complaints data including extensive root cause analysis to identify areas we can improve and we map those end-to-end journeys with lower levels of satisfaction using a variety of customer personas.</p> <p>We have engaged directly with customers through specific research and co-creation projects on ways to improve Priority Services and simplify access to support. More recently we asked customers for their views on this strategy as a whole as well as satisfaction with the support we offer.</p> <p>Our vulnerability strategy, complaints action plan and overall continuous improvement programme are overseen by our senior Customer Experience Group. Our internal Vulnerability Advisory Panel and team of Vulnerability Experts ensure improvements are made in the areas of the business that will have the biggest impact on our customers. Our overall strategy is overseen by our expert Stakeholder Vulnerability Advisory Panel which has a direct link into our Customer Challenge Group.</p> <p>We hold several external accreditations including the British Standard for Inclusive Service Provision and the Customer Service Excellence award and we regularly benchmark our service within and outside the industry. We are a member of several local and national vulnerability forums which allows us to champion the needs of our water customers and share best practice and new ideas. Our strategy has been endorsed by a range of organisations and we have multiple partnerships in place to both help us deliver the strategy and evolve it further.</p> <p>We take account of a wide range of external data and research and aim to comply with best practice guidance from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the industry regulator, Ofwat • the customer watchdog, CCW • UK Regulators Network • Office of the Public Guardian • other industry regulators such as OFGEM, OFCOM, FCA • Citizens Advice • companies providing excellent customer service outside our industry. 	<p>We will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask customers on Priority Services if they are satisfied with our service, including during incidents, and if their needs have been met using day-to-day tailored feedback surveys. This is in place for operational customer contact and post event surveys. Billing surveys will follow once our new billing system is implemented in 2026. 2. Proactively gather feedback from our customers and learn from their positive and negative experiences. This will include day to day feedback surveys, Trust Pilot reviews, bespoke research projects and root cause analysis of contacts and complaints. We will compare feedback from customers on Priority Services with feedback from all customers. 3. Use external accreditations to ensure our services are meeting the needs of our customers and are considered best practice. This will include the British Standard for Inclusive Service Provision, BS18477, the new ISO 22458:2022 Consumer Vulnerability and the Customer Service Excellence award which we have held since 1996. 4. Undertake detailed customer journey mapping, adopting different customer personas. 5. Undertake specific research with Priority Services customers, or specialist organisations representing them, to understand their expectations for complaint management and how these might differ. We will make changes, where necessary, to improve the journey for complainants. 6. Introduce a satisfaction survey to seek the views of our 300 plus partners. 7. Continue to involve customers, partners, organisations and stakeholders in the co-creation of our services and this strategy as a whole. It will continue to be overseen by our Stakeholder Vulnerability Advisory Panel. 8. Continue to use suggestions from our staff across the business to improve the customer journey. 	<p>Future Challenges:</p> <p>Ongoing system development</p> <p>Enhancing customer support may be constrained by legacy system limitations. We are implementing a new billing system in the next couple of years.</p>	<p>90% of customers on Priority Services are satisfied with our service</p> <p>90% of customers on Priority Services say their needs are met</p> <p>Achieve ISO 22458:2022 Consumer vulnerability by 2030</p> <p>Maintain the Customer Service Excellence award</p> <p>>85% of our partners are satisfied with our service</p>

No.	Minimum expectation	Compliance	Implementation	Monitoring	Challenges	Targets
2.1	Companies should interact with customers in a way that is inclusive for a diverse range of audiences. This should be underpinned by relevant insights, which may include research, engagement and accreditation.	Exceeding	<p>Spotting the signs - page 9 Inclusive services - page 10 Co-design and development of the strategy - page 10 and Appendix I Commitments - pages 11 and 14 Endorsement - page 30 Initiatives - pages 32-45 Partnerships - pages 46-49 Case studies - pages 51-52, 54 and 58-59 A Commitment to Innovation and Inclusivity - Appendix IV</p> <p>In summary, our staff are highly trained and empowered to spot signs of vulnerability and go the extra mile. We are committed to delivering customer care that is tailored, inclusive, and accessible.</p> <p>Our core customer information clearly explains our services, including the support available through Priority Services. We regularly review and update this content based on customer and CCW feedback, ensuring alignment with Ofwat's guidelines. It's also adaptable to meet individual customer needs.</p> <p>We make sure our communications are jargon free and written in plain English. We take account of the guidance of organisations on the accessibility and inclusivity of the information we provide and have worked with the Money Advice Trust, disability charity Scope, the Business Disability Forum, Wiltshire Mind, Quids In and the Shaw Trust to review our bills, leaflets, and website. Case studies are included in the strategy.</p> <p>Our service offering, including communication, has been co-designed and endorsed by organisations representing customers. In this strategy, we have set out the extra help we might typically give to certain customer groups and actions we will take to best support them.</p> <p>We use Recite Me on our website, and following an accessibility audit by a team of experienced pan-disabled testers at the Shaw Trust, we are committed to making improvements across all our web forms to make them accessible for all. Improvements are being made to our website and online forms to become fully WCAG 2.2 AA compliant.</p> <p>We have engaged directly with customers, partners, organisations and stakeholders through specific research and co-creation projects on ways to improve Priority Services and simplify access to support. All feedback is used to drive continuous improvement.</p> <p>We hold several external accreditations including the British Standard for Inclusive Service Provision and the Customer Service Excellence award, and we regularly benchmark our service within and outside the industry. We are a member of several local and national vulnerability forums which allows us to share best practice and new ideas around communication.</p> <p>We have worked with organisations such as the Bristol Somali Resource Centre to support customers struggling to pay, help with language or cultural barriers and educate our staff through awareness raising sessions. We are committed to being a Dementia Friendly organisation with all staff trained as Dementia Friends. We have a Gold Award from the Bristol Dementia Action Alliance for our work. We have a commitment to the Keep Me Posted campaign and Partner Status from Stop Loan Sharks. We previously held the Louder than Word charter mark and although this is no longer run by the RNID, we still work closely with them.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask customers on Priority Services if they are satisfied with our service, including during incidents, and if their needs have been met using day-to-day tailored feedback surveys. This is in place for operational customer contact and post event surveys. Billing surveys will follow once our new billing system is implemented in 2026. 2. Proactively gather feedback from our customers and learn from their positive and negative experiences. This will include day to day feedback surveys, Trust Pilot reviews, bespoke research projects and root cause analysis of contacts and complaints. We will compare feedback from customers on Priority Services with feedback from all customers. 3. Use external accreditations to ensure our services are meeting the needs of our customers and are considered best practice. This will include the British Standard for Inclusive Service Provision, BS18477, the new ISO 22458:2022 Consumer Vulnerability and the Customer Service Excellence award which we have held since 1996. 4. Undertake detailed customer journey mapping, adopting different customer personas. 5. Undertake specific research with Priority Services customers, or specialist organisations representing them, to understand their experience and drive continuous improvement. 6. Continue to work with the Shaw Trust to improve our digital accessibility. 7. Introduce a satisfaction survey to seek the views of our 300 plus partners. 8. Continue to involve customers, partners, organisations and stakeholders in the co-creation of our services and this strategy as a whole. It will continue to be overseen by our Stakeholder Vulnerability Advisory Panel. 9. Utilise our new online lived experience panel to test our products, communication and services 	<p>Future Challenges:</p> <p>Ongoing system development Enhancing customer support may be constrained by legacy system limitations. We are implementing a new billing system in the next couple of years.</p> <p>Societal shifts and economic pressures Rising living costs and a changing global landscape may affect customer wellbeing (financial or non-financial), including mental health. These factors must continue to be considered in how we design and deliver inclusive services.</p>	<p>90% of customers on Priority Services are satisfied with our service</p> <p>90% of customers on Priority Services say their needs are met</p> <p>Achieve ISO 22458:2022 Consumer vulnerability</p> <p>Maintain the Customer Service Excellence Award</p> <p>Comply with WCAG 2.2 AA</p> <p>>85% of our partners are satisfied with our service</p>

No.	Minimum expectation	Compliance	Implementation	Monitoring	Challenges	Targets
2.2	Companies should offer their customers a range of ways to interact and communicate. This includes allowing customers to opt for third party billing where appropriate.	Compliant	<p>Accessible services and communication – pages 8, 9 and 15 Inclusive services – page 10 Tailored services provided to those who need extra help – pages 15-24 Extra help during an incident – page 27 Commitments – pages 11 and 14 Initiatives – pages 32-45</p> <p>In summary, we offer customers a range of channels to interact and communicate with us. We also offer several specific communication options through Priority Services, including large print, braille, a language other than English, and a nominee or third party to interact with us on behalf of the customer. We have a bespoke web page helping customers understand how they can appoint someone to manage their account wessexwater.co.uk/additional-support/managing-someone-elses-account</p> <p>Customers communicate with us through their channel of choice and we make sure we use their preferred channel in our proactive communication eg, during a break in the water supply. Our Customer Care Team also directly support customers on Priority Services during such incidents. We also offer additional ways to interact with us such as SignLive, subtitled video, translation service, Recite Me and Google translate.</p> <p>We offer a range of support to those going through bereavement including an online form for customers to tell us about the death of a loved one.</p> <p>Customers can sign up for Priority Services through a range of channels eg, telephone (including Language Line, SignLive and Relay UK), Live Chat, web form, email, and paper. Customers can also sign up via a third-party organisation, through a data share, a call from our Customer Care team following a face-to-face visit at their property, an application for one of our social tariffs, debt repayment schemes or WaterSure. We prompt customers to sign up following the completion of any web form..</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask customers on Priority Services if they are satisfied with our service, including during incidents, and if their needs have been met using day-to-day tailored feedback surveys. This is in place for operational customer contact and post event surveys. Billing surveys will follow once our new billing system is implemented in 2026. 2. Proactively gather feedback from our customers and learn from their positive and negative experiences. This will include day to day feedback surveys, Trust Pilot reviews, bespoke research projects and root cause analysis of contacts and complaints. We will compare feedback from customers on Priority Services with feedback from all customers. 3. Undertake detailed customer journey mapping, including incidents, adopting different customer personas. 4. Measure the number of customers on Priority Services that our Customer Care Team attempts to contact during an incident as a proportion of the total number of customers on Priority Services who are affected. 	<p>Future Challenges:</p> <p>Evolving customer, stakeholder and regulator expectations What is considered good practice today may not meet expectations tomorrow. We must remain agile and responsive to changing needs, ensuring our services continue to meet high standards and regulatory guidance.</p> <p>Ongoing system development Enhancing customer support may be constrained by legacy system limitations. We are implementing a new billing system in the next couple of years.</p> <p>Societal shifts and economic pressures Rising living costs and a changing global landscape may affect customer wellbeing (financial or non-financial), including mental health. These factors must continue to be considered in how we design and deliver inclusive services.</p>	<p>90% of customers on Priority Services are satisfied with our service</p> <p>90% of customers on Priority Services say their needs are met</p> <p>Attempt to contact 100% Priority Services customers with available contact details during an incident to check if they need bottled water or additional support.</p>

No.	Minimum expectation	Compliance	Implementation	Monitoring	Challenges	Targets
2.3	Companies should consult with CCW, and engage with stakeholders and other customer representatives, when making significant changes to their proposed service offering around vulnerability.	Exceeding	<p>Stakeholder Vulnerability Advisory Panel – page 7 Co-design and development of the strategy – page 10 and Appendix I Endorsement – page 30 Partnerships – pages 46–49 Continuous improvement – page 10 Initiatives – pages 32–45 Case study – pages 54 and 58–59</p> <p>In summary, our expert Stakeholder Vulnerability Advisory Panel (VAP) oversees our work in this area. They support, advise, and challenge our Vulnerability Strategy to ensure we are fulfilling our commitment to reach all our customers. Along with our partners, organisations and wider stakeholders, they have helped co-create the services we offer to their specific client groups on Priority Services and identified ways to raise awareness and increase take-up of our support, improve the customer experience and the effectiveness of our partnerships.</p> <p>CCW is a member of our Stakeholder VAP and independent Customer Challenge Group (CCG) and we consult with them about any significant changes to customer policies, processes, and services. CCW have provided a quote in our strategy. We worked directly with CCW on understanding what a simple application process would look like as part of their affordability review.</p> <p>Our vulnerability strategy has been in place since 2018 and year on year it has evolved to meet changing needs and expectations. It is co-designed with and endorsed by our partners, organisations, and stakeholders as well as customers.</p> <p>We have worked with customers and stakeholders to improve our service offering and showcase our work through case studies. Previous versions of our strategy are on our website https://corporate.wessexwater.co.uk/document-library.</p> <p>We ask organisations who represent customers to attend our internal Vulnerability Advisory Panel meetings with our Vulnerability Experts. This helps with staff training and gives valuable insight to help us improve the customer experience. Our policy team work with other areas of the business such as our wellbeing team, disability working group, race at work group, and social mobility group to share partnerships, resources, and experience, including lived experience.</p> <p>We also utilise our new online lived experience panel to test our products, communication and services.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to learn from, explore best practice, and directly involve our partner organisations and stakeholders and companies inside and outside the sector, in the ongoing development of our support for customers who need extra help. 2. Review, update and publish our strategy each year overseen by our expert Stakeholder Advisory Panel. 3. Continue to engage with CCW and other stakeholders about any significant changes to policies, processes, and publications relating to customers who need extra help. 4. Monitor customer feedback, root cause analysis of complaints, and top reasons customers are on the Priority Services register to assess the training needs of our staff. 5. Utilise our new online lived experience panel to test our products, communication and services. 	Not applicable	This expectation relates to qualitative stakeholder engagement and consultation, so no numeric target applies.

No.	Minimum expectation	Compliance	Implementation	Monitoring	Challenges	Targets
3.1	Companies should take active steps to identify customers who require extra help who have not yet been identified.	Exceeding	<p>Ethos and values - page 6 Going the extra mile - page 8 Spotting the signs - page 9 Four workstreams - page 31 Initiatives - pages 32-45 Partnerships - pages 46-49 Case studies - pages 53, 56 and 57</p> <p>In summary, our staff are trained and empowered to spot the signs of vulnerability and go the extra mile for customers. Having designed our services to improve the experience of customers who need extra help, we know it's critical to maximise awareness, increase uptake and improve the customer experience. In 2013, working with our Stakeholder Vulnerability Advisory Panel, we set up four workstreams to meet these goals and have a wealth of past, present, and future initiatives under each of these workstreams.</p> <p>Growing partnerships is vital to help us identify customers who need extra help. We work with over 300 partners in whichever way suits them from providing advice to customers and promoting our support through to data sharing and direct referral on to our schemes. Our partners also advise us on our services and endorse our strategy. Our outreach and identification efforts are aligned to the 'Reach' element of the PSR standards, helping ensure that no eligible customer is missed.</p> <p>We work collaboratively on projects with other stakeholders or organisations often alongside energy Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) or other water companies eg, sponsored a Priority Services champion at Citizens Advice Dorset, worked with the Centre for Sustainable Energy to understand how we can better work with the health sector, and more recently started a project with Kidney Care UK to reach and better support those with chronic kidney disease.</p> <p>When customers register for Priority Services, their information is recorded on our systems so we can tailor the service we provide. Our teams are trained to spot and respond to any signs of vulnerability and proactively sign customers up to Priority Services where relevant.</p> <p>We have data-sharing agreements in place with energy DNOs such as National Grid Energy Distribution, local councils, and fire services and we are expanding this to energy suppliers this year. We share and receive data for those customers who need to be on Priority Services. We are supporting Northumbrian Water's Support for All project and the national data sharing initiative through Water UK.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask customers if they are aware of Priority Services through our ongoing image tracking survey of 2,000 customers across our region. We will also compare our results with CCW's Water Matters research. 2. Increase the reach of Priority Services across our region growing the number of customers on our register over time. 3. Increase the number of data shares we have with organisations such as local councils and fire services. 4. Introduce a satisfaction survey to seek the views of our 300 plus partners. 5 Continue to extend the range of initiatives we have to increase uptake of our support. We will develop and fund additional joint projects with partners such as local authorities, housing and social care providers, charities and foodbanks, building on lessons learned from previous projects. 	<p>Future Challenges:</p> <p>Effective data sharing Seamless, secure and continued data sharing across stakeholders and organisations is essential to reach all customers who need our support and to achieve our 'tell us once' approach.</p>	<p>>65% of bill payers are aware of Priority Services by 2030</p> <p>Increase the number of households on Priority Services to around 320,000 (25%) by 2030</p> <p>>85% of our partners are satisfied with our service</p>

No.	Minimum expectation	Compliance	Implementation	Monitoring	Challenges	Targets
3.2	Companies should take steps to proactively increase customer awareness of the extra help available to those who need it.	Exceeding	<p>Spotting the signs - page 9 Four workstreams - page 31 Initiatives - pages 32-45 Partnerships - pages 46-49 Case studies - pages 51-52, 53, 56, 57, 60 and 61</p> <p>In summary, we know it's critical to maximise awareness of our support and increase uptake. In 2013, working with our Stakeholder Vulnerability Advisory Panel, we set up four workstreams to meet these goals and have a wealth of past, present, and future initiatives under each of these workstreams.</p> <p>We have data-sharing agreements in place with energy distribution network operators, local councils, and fire services. We share and receive data for those customers who need to be on Priority Services.</p> <p>Each year our promotional activities for Priority Services typically involve a mixture of paid-for promotion and social media advertising linked to external awareness weeks and campaigns, working with partners, and utilising every touch point we have with our customers. Examples can be seen throughout our strategy but include front of bill messages, welcome packs, customer magazine, e-newsletter, website, leaflets, welcome packs, letters about operational work, flyers at community events and then pharmacy bags, petrol pumps, hospital magazines, tenant packs, bespoke flyers, partner websites or social media and radio adverts. We also use case studies such as Susan. Sometimes external factors drive more tailored activities such as during the pandemic.</p> <p>We run internal news stories to encourage and raise awareness with our staff and their friends and families.</p> <p>Our teams, including contact centre, back office, and front line, are trained to spot and respond to any signs of vulnerability and proactively promote and sign customers up to Priority Services and/or affordability where relevant. We signpost to Priority Services at the end of web forms, during water quality checks, lead pipe replacement, Home Check water efficiency visits, winter ready home visits and sewer misuse engagement. We have Priority Services and Spotting the signs of vulnerability e-Learning modules that are mandatory to complete.</p> <p>We encourage our partners to promote our services and provide promotional resources for them to use via PartnerHub such as zap banners, flyers, and posters. We train our partners on all our support schemes. Our funded debt advice partners can access additional funding if they actively promote and sign customers up to Priority Services.</p> <p>In 2024, we launched a new community outreach service, with two co-ordinators running drop-in and appointment sessions across our region. In 2025, we are expanding this service in partnership with Bristol Water and Bournemouth Water with a new adviser to cover our wastewater supply area as well.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Ask customers if they are aware of Priority Services through our ongoing image tracking survey of 2,000 customers across our region. We will also compare our results with CCW's Water Matters research. 2 Increase the reach of Priority Services across our region growing the number of customers on our register over time. 3 Attend customer events in the community and run awareness sessions with our partners each year. 4 Increase the number of data shares we have with organisations such as local councils and fire services. 5 Continue to extend the range of initiatives we have to raise awareness of our support. We will develop and fund additional joint projects with partners such as local authorities, housing and social care providers, charities and foodbanks, building on lessons learned from previous projects. 6 Continue to fund a variety of environmental and community projects through the Wessex Water Foundation, focusing on schemes that are proven to be effective and innovative. 	Not applicable	<p>>65% of bill payers are aware of Priority Services by 2030</p> <p>Increase the number of households on Priority Services to around 320,000 (25%) by 2030</p> <p>>85% of our partners are satisfied with our service</p>

No.	Minimum expectation	Compliance	Implementation	Monitoring	Challenges	Targets
3.3	Companies should train their staff to spot potential requirements for extra help, even when a customer has not previously declared it.	Exceeding	<p>Values – page 6 Going the extra mile – page 8 Spotting the signs and other training– page 9 Tailored services provided to those who need extra help – pages 15-24 Our promise for customers who are not satisfied with the provision of extra help – page 25 Extra help during an incident – pages 27-28 Check in process – page 29</p> <p>In summary, our staff are trained and empowered to spot the signs of vulnerability and go the extra mile. We make sure the training is relevant to their role. Some of this training is provided in-house and some has been developed with external partners. It is a mixture of face-to-face classroom training and online learning. Our suite of vulnerability e-learning is mandatory for customer facing staff. We also hold ‘lived experience’ and ‘learn at lunch’ talks.</p> <p>We have Vulnerability Experts across our business who champion the needs of customers and make sure our teams are fully trained and equipped to give extra help to customers who need it. Our annual Vulnerability Awareness Week highlights issues that may affect not only our customers but our staff too and how we can support them in complex situations.</p> <p>We have specialist teams who support the customer from when they sign up to Priority Services until they move out of our area, or they no longer require extra help. We provide extensive tailored support during any incidents with our Customer Care team proactively helping Priority Services customers throughout. Our Customer Care team also sign customers up to Priority Services and keep their information up to date as well as administer our data shares and referrals to Priority Services from front line teams. Our social policy team administer our Priority Services check-in process.</p> <p>Following our 2024–25 training review, we’re launching new GEM training. It includes core content on identifying customers who need extra care, tailoring support, and signposting to external resources. It also covers staff resilience, helping them manage challenging or sensitive customer interactions.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Continue to be a dementia friendly utility making sure all existing and new staff are trained to be dementia friends. 2 Ensure all customer-facing staff become Friends against Scams. 3 Monitor the number of staff trained on our suite of vulnerability iLearning and evolve those training programmes using external expertise. 4 Continue to monitor the top five Priority Service needs to ensure we have the training in place to support our staff to deal with specific situations eg, deaf awareness. 	<p>Future Challenges:</p> <p>Training and workforce readiness</p> <p>Keeping staff training up to date and relevant is essential. Ongoing development of our training will ensure our teams are equipped to manage new technologies and meet evolving customer expectations with confidence and care.</p>	<p>100% of staff are Dementia Friends</p> <p>100% of staff are Friends against Scams.</p> <p>100% of customer facing staff to complete vulnerability iLearning</p>

No.	Minimum expectation	Compliance	Implementation	Monitoring	Challenges	Targets
3.4	Companies should actively consider how they can reduce communication burdens on customers who need extra help; this could include establishing data sharing arrangements with partner organisations.	Exceeding	<p>Initiatives - pages 32-45 Data sharing - page 48 Case study - page 51-52 A Commitment to Innovation and Inclusivity - Appendix IV</p> <p>In summary, we aim to reduce the burden of customers seeking help and having to contact multiple organisations through data sharing and auto-enrolment on to our support schemes where we can.</p> <p>We have data-sharing agreements in place with energy distribution network operators, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), local councils, and fire services. We are expanding this to energy suppliers this year and over time to telecoms and charities as well as more councils and remaining fire services. We are supporting Northumbrian Water's Support for All project and have been involved in the national data sharing initiative through Water UK since 2017.</p> <p>We share and receive data for customers who either need to be on Priority Services or are likely to be eligible for and benefit from an affordability scheme. In many cases we can automatically enrol customers on to schemes without the need for them to apply, achieving a 'tell us once' approach. For example, data matching with the DWP allows us to auto-enrol Pension Credit recipients onto our Discount for Low-Income Pensioner tariff and our data shares with energy DNOs allows us to auto-enrol customers onto Priority Services.</p> <p>We have IE Hub, a tool that allows customers to complete their income and expenditure statement online. We receive the completed financial budget and can automatically apply a suitable affordability scheme. Customers flag any wider vulnerability so we can check if they need to be on Priority Services at the same time.</p> <p>Our funded debt advice partners apply for Priority Services on behalf of their clients while referring them on to one of our social tariffs or debt repayment schemes.</p> <p>Our two-way data share with the fire service helps to provide Safe and Well visits to customers in our area.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Increase the reach of Priority Services across our region growing the number of customers on our register over time. 2 Increase the number of data shares we have with organisations such as local councils and fire services. 3 Continue to support Northumbrian Water's Support for All project and the national data share project. 4 Fully evaluate our IE hub pilot. 	<p>Future Challenges:</p> <p>Effective data sharing Seamless, secure and continued data sharing across stakeholders and organisations is essential to reach all customers who need our support and to achieve our 'tell us once' approach.</p>	<p>Increase the number of households on Priority Services to around 320,000 (25%) by 2030</p>

No.	Minimum expectation	Compliance	Implementation	Monitoring	Challenges	Targets
4.1	Companies should take appropriate steps to record customers' extra help needs. These records should be held securely and in line with wider data protection requirements.	Exceeding	<p>We are required by law to prioritise customers who may be considered vulnerable or at risk. The lawful basis under which we gather and use personal information for these purposes is to carry out a task in the public interest. In carrying out this legal duty, we use information about their health so we can identify the best way to prioritise our support for them as would be expected from a supplier of essential services.</p> <p>We hold Priority Services data on a stand-alone register that is accessible only by staff who have a need to use it in their roles including during incidents. The amount of information shared is based on the actions required. For example, a customer's underlying medical reason for their presence on the register is not automatically shared unless it is absolutely necessary.</p> <p>We hold customers on the Priority Services Register under the needs codes agreed with the energy sector. We log communication methods, nominee details, and passwords within the Priority Services Register. Each need has a priority code automatically linked to it. Staff are trained and provided with information either online or in leaflet form. This approach aligns with the 'Needs and Services' element of the updated PSR standards, ensuring that each customer's specific circumstances are matched with appropriate, consistent support.</p> <p>We have recently undertaken research with customers who say they prefer to tell us their needs and then let us tell them which services they will receive rather than select from a long list of support - see page 55 of the full research report on our website corporate.wessexwater.co.uk/media/renfbzdk/vulnerability-strategy-research-report.pdf.</p> <p>As part of the national Priority Services data sharing project with Water UK and ENA and working with the Safeguarding working group, we want to better understand how we can get the best mix of needs codes and services. We are also exploring this further with our Stakeholder Vulnerability Advisory Panel.</p>	<p>We will contact customers on Priority Services every two years to establish if they wish to continue to receive Priority Services, check their needs and details are up to date, and are also given the option to opt out of us sharing their data with other organisations. This is the attempted and actual process as outlined in the Priority Services Register standards.</p> <p>We also check Priority Services customer details when they are in contact with us.</p>	<p>Future Challenges:</p> <p>Provision of services at scale</p> <p>As the number of customers on Priority Services grows, the Data Checking, process, communication and alternative water supply provision during larger scale incidents are becoming increasingly resource intensive. Ensuring timely and effective contact with all registered customers is a growing challenge.</p> <p>Effective data sharing</p> <p>Seamless, secure and continued data sharing across stakeholders and organisations is essential to reach all customers who need our support and to achieve our 'tell us once' approach.</p>	<p>Attempt to contact 90% customers on our Priority Services Register</p> <p>Actually contact 55% customers on our Priority Services Register</p>
4.2	Companies' records should be reviewed regularly to ensure they are up to date.	Exceeding	<p>Our ambitious commitments - to 2025 - page 11 Temporary support - page 21 Check-in - page 29</p> <p>In summary, we regularly contact and review customers on our Priority Services Register to ensure their details and support required are up to date. If we haven't heard from a customer within two years or received an update via one of our data share partners, we will check in with them at least twice. We also take every opportunity when customers on Priority Services get in touch with us to check their data.. This is the attempted and actual process as outlined in the Priority Services Register standards 'data checking' focus area.</p> <p>We also check Priority Services Customer details when they are in contact with us.</p> <p>Customers who need temporary extra help and want to be added to our Priority Services Register can do so under one of four categories, agreed with the energy sector. These are Temporary post-hospital, Temporary- life change, Temporary- young adult, and Families with children under five.</p> <p>Codes will either drop off after 12 months or in the case of age, when children turn 18 or five.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contact customers on Priority Services every two years to establish if they wish to continue to receive Priority Services, check their needs and details are up to date, and are also given the option to opt out of us sharing their data with other organisations. This is the attempted and actual process as outlined in the Priority Services Register standards. 2. Ensure we have the most up to date contact details, especially email addresses, mobile and landline numbers for our customers using different techniques to obtain their most up-to-date details, as well as asking if any third party support is required. <p>We also check Priority Services customer details when they are in contact with us.</p>	<p>Future Challenges:</p> <p>Provision of services at scale</p> <p>As the number of customers on Priority Services grows, the Data Checking, process, communication and alternative water supply provision during larger scale incidents are becoming increasingly resource intensive. Ensuring timely and effective contact with all registered customers is a growing challenge.</p> <p>Effective data sharing</p> <p>Seamless, secure and continued data sharing across stakeholders and organisations is essential to reach all customers who need our support and to achieve our 'tell us once' approach.</p>	<p>Attempt to contact 90% customers on our Priority Services Register</p> <p>Actually contact 55% customers on our Priority Services Register</p>

No.	Minimum expectation	Compliance	Implementation	Monitoring	Challenges	Targets
4.3	Companies should consider how their records of customers' needs can be designed in a way that can help deliver wider benefits to their customers; for example, reducing communication burdens for customers through data sharing.	Exceeding	<p>Initiatives – pages 32-45 Data Sharing – page 48 A Commitment to Innovation and Inclusivity – Appendix IV</p> <p>In summary, we aim for a tell-us-once approach. We have data-sharing agreements in place with energy distribution network operators, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), local councils, and fire services. We are expanding this to energy suppliers this year and over time to telecoms and charities as well as more councils and remaining fire services. We are supporting Northumbrian Water's Support for All project and have been involved in the national data sharing initiative through Water UK since 2017.</p> <p>We have aligned our needs codes with the energy sector to ensure our data sharing is effective. We have agreed to minimum standards of service for each needs code.</p> <p>In line with Priority Services Register standards, we're strengthening our approach to Data checking and Reach, ensuring customers only need to tell their story once and that no one eligible misses out on the support available</p> <p>We have collaborated with National Grid and Scottish and Southern Electricity Network (SSEN) to signpost and promote two-way Priority Services online and in other communications. Our two-way data sharing with the fire service helps to provide Safe and Well visits to customers in the area.</p> <p>Customers' extra help needs are recorded on our Priority Services Register and automatically link to our contact management and other operational systems. We separately update the customer's billing account. Staff have access to Priority Services data if it is needed to fulfil their role.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Increase the number of data shares we have with organisations such as local councils and fire services. 2 Continue to support Northumbrian Water's Support for All project and the national data share project. 	<p>Future Challenges:</p> <p>Effective data sharing Seamless, secure and continued data sharing across stakeholders and organisations is essential to reach all customers who need our support and to achieve our 'tell us once' approach.</p>	<p>This expectation focuses on the design of data systems and the wider benefits of data sharing. As such, it is not suited to numeric performance targets.</p>
4.4	In designing their approach to recording and, where relevant, sharing customer vulnerability data, companies should clearly explain to customers how their data will be used, including any choices available to them. Companies should take steps to understand how their customers who need extra help feel about the use of their data.	Exceeding	<p>Warm Welcome – page 29</p> <p>In summary, we hold and share data under substantial public interest (SPI) in common with all water companies and deemed appropriate by the Information Commissioners Office. We have set up data-sharing protocols with our local energy distribution network operators which set out our lawful bases for sharing and limiting the use of information to the provision of Priority Services only. We are very careful to limit sharing to what is necessary to achieve the purpose.</p> <p>We have a comprehensive privacy policy on our website which outlines how we use, share, and store customer data, and it provides information on their rights. www.wessexwater.co.uk/legal/privacy-policy#PSR</p> <p>We signpost to this policy on customers' bills and in a variety of literature.</p> <p>As well as providing information on our website, we are updating our online sign-up process to provide information in sections making it easier to digest when customers apply for Priority Services. When a customer signs up to our Priority Services Register over the phone or via Live Chat, we read out a statement.</p> <p>Once registered for Priority Services, a customer will receive a welcome pack to confirm we have added them to our register. This is in line with the Priority Service Register Standards 'registration' focus area. We let them know why we are asking for their information and how we will use it so they can make choices. There are explanations about the chances to opt-out where we are processing their personal data under a legitimate interest, for example, to suppress their information from being automatically shared with other utility providers or to be removed from the Priority Services Register altogether.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Ask customers on Priority Services if they are satisfied with our service, including during incidents, and if their needs have been met using day-to-day tailored feedback surveys. This is in place for operational customer contact and billing and post event surveys will follow once our new billing system is implemented in 2026. 2 Proactively gather feedback from our customers and learn from their positive and negative experiences. This will include day to day feedback surveys, Trust Pilot reviews, bespoke research projects and root cause analysis of contacts and complaints. We will compare feedback from customers on Priority Services with feedback from all customers. 3 Use our check ins with customers to determine whether they still wish to be registered for Priority Services and are happy with the way we are using their data. 	<p>Future Challenges:</p> <p>Ongoing system development Enhancing customer support may be constrained by legacy system limitations. We are implementing a new billing system in the next couple of years.</p>	<p>90% of customers on Priority Services are satisfied with our service</p> <p>90% of customers on Priority Services say their needs are met</p>

No.	Minimum expectation	Compliance	Implementation	Monitoring	Challenges	Targets
5.1	Companies should develop and maintain a vulnerability strategy setting out how they plan to support the extra help needs of their customer base.	Exceeding	<p>Stakeholder Vulnerability Advisory Panel – page 7 Commitments – pages 11-14 Initiatives – pages 32-45 Case study – pages 58-59 Development of the strategy – Appendix I A Commitment to Innovation and Inclusivity – Appendix IV</p> <p>In summary, we have had a vulnerability strategy in place since 2018 and year on year it has evolved to meet changing needs and expectations. It is co-created with our customers, partners, organisations, and stakeholders and updated and published annually.</p> <p>Our strategy is endorsed by customers, organisations, stakeholders and CCW and its development is overseen by our expert Stakeholder Vulnerability Advisory Panel (VAP). The strategy sets out our approach to delivering extra help in the short, medium, and long term. This year we have updated it to take account of the Service for all guidelines and views of our VAP, CCW, our partners (including those we fund) and our customers through a variety of engagement and research.</p> <p>From 2025, we will provide further governance by sharing twice-yearly performance updates with our board.</p> <p>The strategy includes our ethos and values, the work we've done in this important area to date and our commitments and targets to 2030. It explains the governance we have in place for the strategy and provides a timeline for its development including key research and milestones. Case studies are used to showcase our work. Previous versions of this strategy can be found on our website corporate.wessexwater.co.uk/document-library</p> <p>We constantly look for new ways to improve the service we offer. We have four very well-established workstreams, with a wealth of innovative initiatives in each, to maximise awareness, increase take-up of the extra help we provide, and improve the customer experience. All initiatives, past, present, and future, are mapped to the Service for all guidance.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Continue to involve customers, partners, organisations and stakeholders in the co-creation of our services and this strategy as a whole. 2 Monitor and report on progress with delivering our initiatives and meeting our commitments and aims. 3 Update and publish our strategy each year overseen by our Stakeholder Vulnerability Advisory Panel. 4 Comply with or exceed all expectations set out in the Service for all guidance. 	<p>Future Challenges:</p> <p>Evolving customer, stakeholder and regulator expectations What is considered good practice today may not meet expectations tomorrow. We must remain agile and responsive to changing needs, ensuring our services continue to meet high standards and regulatory guidance.</p> <p>Societal shifts and economic pressures Rising living costs and a changing global landscape may affect customer wellbeing (financial or non-financial), including mental health. These factors must continue to be considered in how we design and deliver inclusive services.</p>	<p>Update and publish our strategy each year, overseen by our Stakeholder Vulnerability Advisory Panel.</p> <p>Provide a twice-yearly update to our board.</p> <p>Publish and review the vulnerability strategy annually, with documented updates reflecting stakeholder and customer feedback, regulatory guidance, and performance data.</p>

No.	Minimum expectation	Compliance	Implementation	Monitoring	Challenges	Targets
5.2	Companies should take steps to understand the likely underlying requirements for extra help in their areas.	Exceeding	<p>Understanding the level of help required - pages 12-13 Our ambitious commitments to 2030 - page 14 Tailored services provided to those who need extra help - pages 15-24 Initiatives - pages 32-45 Partnerships - pages 46-49 Case Studies - pages 53, 57 and 61 Development of the strategy - Appendix I</p> <p>In summary, we have had a vulnerability strategy in place since 2018 and year on year it has evolved to meet changing needs and expectations. We have four very well established workstreams, with a wealth of innovative initiatives in each, to maximise awareness, increase uptake of the extra help we provide and improve the customer experience. All initiatives, past, present, and future are mapped to the Service for all guidance. Each year we have used case studies to showcase our work. Previous versions of this strategy can be found on our website www.corporate.wessexwater.co.uk/document-library</p> <p>Our expert Stakeholder Vulnerability Advisory Panel oversees the development of our strategy. They support, advise, and challenge us to ensure we are fulfilling our commitment to reach all our customers. Along with our 300 partners and wider stakeholders, they have helped co-create the services we offer to specific client groups on Priority Services, understand any gaps in our service provision and identify individual initiatives to raise awareness and increase take-up of our support.</p> <p>In our strategy, we outline the current and future needs of people in the UK, detailing how many customers we support through Priority Services and our goals for 2030. As of March 2025, we support 152,838 households—24.9% of those eligible—based on analysis by the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE), which estimates 615,083 eligible households, or 47% of our customer base. Our partnership with CSE has significantly enhanced our understanding of PSR eligibility and reach, using Census 2021 and open datasets to identify underserved groups and geographic areas for targeted outreach. This data-driven approach helps us focus promotion efforts, particularly for long-term needs such as disability or age-related vulnerabilities, while also highlighting the challenges of identifying short-term or less visible needs. Through detailed mapping and analysis, we continue to refine our targeting, improve service delivery, and ensure that those most at risk are identified and supported, with a target of reaching 25% of all households by 2030—equivalent to around 50% of eligible customers.</p> <p>In line with the 'reach' element of the Priority Services Register standards, we are committed to identifying and engaging all eligible customers, particularly those who may be underserved or unaware of the support available.</p> <p>Working closely with more strategic partners and funding projects we can identify the level of help needed and the gap in Priority Services reach. For example, we have been working with Kidney Care UK since 2023 to reach and better support people with chronic kidney disease. In 2022 we worked with the Royal Association for Deaf. We have also had partnerships with many organisations supporting people living with dementia. These partners work with us or customers in many ways including hosting events, sharing social media posts, sending promotional material to customers, attending venues where customers with extra needs will be, and supporting with video content.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Increase the reach of Priority Services across our region growing the number of customers on our register over time. 2 Use a variety of tools and external data sources to track and identify trends and gaps in our Priority Services reach now and into the future, working with external partners where needed. 3 Continue to explore opportunities to work together with existing or new partners or organisations to reach more groups of customers that need extra help. 	<p>Future Challenges:</p> <p>Societal shifts and economic pressures</p> <p>Rising living costs and a changing global landscape may affect customer wellbeing (financial or non-financial), including mental health. These factors must continue to be considered in how we design and deliver inclusive services.</p>	<p>Increase the number of households on Priority Services to around 320,000 (25%) by 2030</p>

Appendix IV

A commitment to innovation and inclusivity

Throughout this document, we present numerous examples of our pioneering efforts in the water industry. Our strategy, first published in 2018 and updated annually, highlights our unwavering commitment to innovation and inclusivity.

In 2015, we became the first water company to comply with the British Standard 18477 for inclusive service, and we have maintained this compliance for the past decade

Our dedication to national data sharing began in 2016 when we joined a cross-sector water and energy working group. We advocated for bilateral data privacy frameworks, joint signposting on websites, and joint messaging at events. In 2017, we approached the UKRN to advocate for a national register to align needs codes, data privacy frameworks, and names. By 2018, we had introduced data sharing with an energy distribution network operator (DNO) and have continued to push for national data sharing beyond the water and energy sectors. Our data sharing now includes energy distributors and a regional fire service. (see page 48).

Regarding financial vulnerability, we have been industry leaders since 2005. Our Tailored Assistance Programme (TAP) offers various schemes and low-rate tariffs to help customers manage their water bills and repay any debt. Our holistic approach includes funding the debt advice sector to provide tailored solutions that meet individual financial circumstances. We were the first water company to introduce a social tariff in 2007. You can find the full history of our affordability schemes and innovations on page 69 and debt advice partnerships on page 46.

We also collaborate with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and local councils to auto-enrol customers on to social tariffs where possible.

In 2013, we established our affordability advisory group, now known as the Vulnerability Advisory Panel. This panel has confirmed that our schemes are fit for purpose and emphasised the need to maximise awareness and uptake. In 2018, we expanded our focus to wider vulnerability, introducing four workstreams to achieve this goal. These workstreams have led to numerous innovative initiatives, both delivered and planned. (see pages 32-45)

One of our key workstreams is growing partnerships. In 2018, we launched PartnerHub, a unique platform designed to collaborate with our 300+ local and regional partners to support customers, especially those facing difficulties with their water bills or who have additional needs. In 2023, we formalised our partnerships and introduced partnership tiers. (see pages 47-48)

Other examples of our innovation include:

- joint projects with DNOs
- 'need to reach' projects (page 50)
- advertising support schemes via hospital magazines, petrol pumps, pharmacy bags, and social media
- the IE hub tool
- National Support Network (page 60)
- first water company to achieve Stop Loan Sharks 'Partner Status'.

You can also find many case studies throughout our previous strategy documents, [Vulnerability strategy](#)

Looking to the future, we aim to:

- offer customers access to grants and support schemes via Lightning Reach
- introduce a widget on our website to remove internet history traces for those being abused
- provide customers with information on preparing for emergencies
- utilise our new online lived experience panel to test our products, communication and services
- install 238,000 smart meters to help customers manage water and energy use
- explore tariff trials to create the right incentives for customers and help tackle affordability.

We would like to hear from you if you have any ideas or comments about this strategy or if you want to partner with us.

Please contact

Kate Robbins

Head of Customer Policy

kate.robbs@wessexwater.co.uk

or

CommunityPartners@wessexwater.co.uk

Also, visit our [PartnerHub website](#) which provides information about the support we offer and offers access to resources to help raise awareness.

Other related documents

This document forms part of a group of documents that set out our strategy, policy and procedure for customers who need extra help.

Other documents include:

- **Priority Services** core customer information
- **Debt recovery** core customer information
- **Help with your bills**
- **WaterSure**
- **Discount for low income pensioners**
- **Switch to a meter**

If you would like to request any of these documents, please get in touch:

Call 0345 600 3 600

(Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm, Saturday 9am to 1pm)

Website Submit an online enquiry: [wessexwater.co.uk/contact-us](https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/contact-us)

Write Wessex Water, 1 Clevedon Walk, Nailsea, Bristol, BS48 1WA

Monitoring and review

This strategy is reviewed every 12 months or in line with other legislative changes.



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