



# Helping customers that need extra support

Our Customer Vulnerability Strategy

June 2025



from  
**Southern  
Water** 

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# Foreword



**Lawrence  
Gosden**  
Chief Executive  
Officer

I've had the pleasure of meeting many of our customers at our Your Water Matters community drop-in events. They have told me that cost of living increases and the rise in our own charges is having an impact, and it weighs heavily on me that we've added to the burden that many of them are feeling.

We're at a turning point in our transformation, as we close one investment period and move on to deliver our largest business plan yet. That plan means bills will increase, but it also includes offering support to those with extra needs, when they need it most. We have already increased the financial support available, with customers having access to a minimum discount of 45% on their bills on our Essentials tariff. We've also increased the additional community support we offer, alongside promoting our debt relief schemes and priority services.

We've increased the size of our Hardship Fund, which helps customers buy critical essentials such as white goods, beds and other furniture; Community Grants which offer local charities the chance to apply for much-needed funding or even hosting our annual Christmas dinners as part of our Winter Energy Grant scheme, we're always looking for ways we can do more to help those that need it most.

Our partnerships in the community are critical to us reaching customers who might find themselves in vulnerable circumstances, whether that be temporarily or more long term, which is why we've recruited a dedicated Partnership Manager.

Their focus will be to build on the relationships we've already established and to create new opportunities for us to share information about our priority customers so we can get more of those eligible on to our register or one of our support schemes and tariffs. We've already increased the number of customers on our register from 36,441 in 2020 to more than 310,000 during 2024–25, and we want to go further.

This strategy will enable us to do this. It focuses on improving access to bottled water and emergency support, improving our communications so they're accessible to all, using data to focus our support where it's needed most as well as building on our relationships with charities and local authorities to reach more of those in need. We're confident that it's the right strategy, and we've tested it with CCW and those customers who will benefit directly from the changes we're making. We've also made sure that the vulnerability pillars we've defined align specifically with the Priority Standards and Service for All guidance set out by our regulator, Ofwat.

## Our purpose

We're committed to making sure our customers have access to high-quality, affordable and efficient water and wastewater services, while we protect and enhance our communities and the environment.

Our purpose is to provide water for life to enhance health and wellbeing, protect and improve the environment and sustain the economy.

That means everyone, regardless of their circumstances, being able to access the services they need.





## Our purpose continued

### Our commitment:

Our strategy outlines how we plan to deliver on our purpose and make sure everyone, regardless of their circumstances, can access the services they need.



### What this looks like

We'll increase the number of customers on our Priority Services Register using relevant regional data and insight, identifying who is eligible for support and making sure they know about the help available to them. We'll use our financial assistance data to focus our attention in particular areas across our region where we can see communities in need of additional support.

We'll also work with our stakeholders and partners to shape our services, making sure additional needs are considered by involving others as we develop them. This includes testing and discussions with our Customer Challenge and Vulnerability panels.

To measure the effectiveness of our services, we'll track key metrics such as customer satisfaction, focusing on those accessing our support services. We'll carry out a regular annual review of these metrics to continuously improve our services.

Our strategy, commitments and key metrics will be reviewed by our Environment and Social Governance Board (ESG) annually, and progress monitored monthly by our Executive Performance Committee, making sure that we stay focused on outcomes and are transparent about our achievements and challenges.

# Our plan on a page

At Southern Water, we're committed to making sure our customers have access to high-quality, affordable and efficient water and wastewater services, while we protect and enhance our communities and the environment.

That means that everyone, regardless of their circumstances, being able to access the services they need.

In creating our strategy we used insight from thousands of interviews from customer research, millions of data points from contact and demographic data, and working with expert stakeholders and expertise.

We currently support over 310,000 customers on our Priority Services Register (PSR) and aim to increase to more than 500,000 by 2030.

Our strategy is to take a proactive approach to help **recognise** those that need support, accurately **record** requirements, **respond** with inclusive support that aligns with customer needs and **report** with measurable targets on effectiveness to continuously improve the service we provide to everyone of our customers.



To deliver our strategy our customers told us there are 4 key themes to help improve the support we provide from today:

- 1 Engaging

Increase engagement with customers who are already part of our PSR, while raising awareness among those who might need access.
- 2 Partnerships

We'll work more closely with other organisations to understand our customers' needs and the different support they're receiving to provide a holistic view.
- 3 Tailored Service

Our aim is to provide a tailored individual service that supports our customers when they need it most.
- 4 Support when you need it most

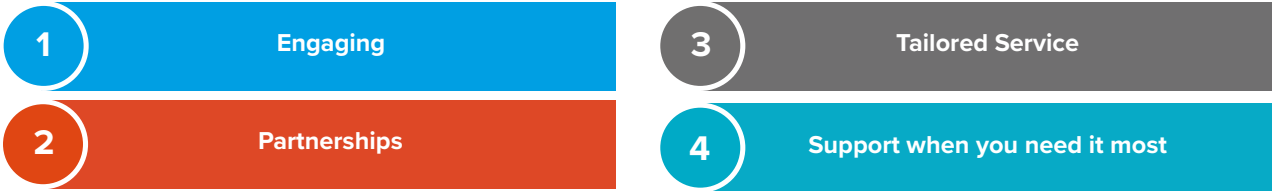
We want to provide fast, easy and accessible service when things go wrong to help those when they need it most.

## How our strategy meets with Ofwat's vulnerability guidance:

Objective	What it means	
<b>High standards</b>	Companies should provide high standards of service and support to customers requiring extra help. Customers who need extra support receive it and are happy with the service provided. Customers know what extra help they can expect from their company. Companies aspire to improve levels of service and seek to ensure that customers who have extra help needs are no less satisfied with their service than customers as a whole.	Our strategy outlines the services available to our priority services customers, how to access them and what to expect from us. We're committed to clear communication, setting out expectations for additional support across all areas of our operations along with transparency when we fall short. We offer multiple contact options, including Recite Me and plan to introducing services such as interpreters live, to make it easy for customers to communicate with us when needed. To make sure that our strategy remains relevant we'll collaborate with internal and external stakeholders throughout the journey and measure customer engagement and satisfaction to make sure our approach is effective.
<b>Inclusive services</b>	Water companies' systems should be designed to meet the needs of their diverse customer base. Services and communications should be designed in an accessible and inclusive way that does not harm customers who have undeclared extra help needs. Companies should collaborate with service users and subject matter experts in designing their services.	To ensure our services meet the needs of our customers, we use insight to understand additional requirements and have created processes to ensure vulnerability is actively considered in the design of our services and operations. By offering a variety of communication options, including an accessible website, the introduction of video relay service and alternative language options, we aim to ensure customers can engage with us in a way that suits them best. Our goal is to remove barriers, reduce customer efforts and work together with stakeholders to implement solutions such as data sharing for 'tell us once' and auto enrolment making our services inclusive and accessible for all, a commitment evidenced by our BSI ISO 22458 international kitemark for inclusive services.
<b>Identifying needs</b>	Companies should have systems in place to effectively identify customers who may have extra help or support needs; and those customers who are willing or able to self-declare these needs should be able to do so easily.	Our strategy sets out our aim to proactively identify and support customers with additional needs through a combination of colleague training, including stakeholder led sessions, and using innovative tools such as AI to aid recognising extra needs in our contact centres. Our work within our communities through drop in events and field agent outreach helps us connect with those that may need assistance, while those customers reaching out directly can access our priority services within one click on our accessible website. Alongside this our partnership with key organisations means we can extend our reach utilising their insight and networks to enable data sharing initiatives meaning no one is overlooked.

How our strategy meets with Ofwat’s vulnerability guidance (continued):

Objective	What it means	
Recording needs	Customers’ extra needs should be effectively recorded and reviewed, with customers informed about how their data is used and their views around privacy understood and taken into account.	To ensure we tailor the service and support our customers need it is key our records are maintained and checked regularly. We record our customers additional needs with account flags and prompts managed through our secure internal systems and ensure our records are up to date by routinely checking for requirements during all customer interactions. We continue to maintain and report our performance commitment targets for contacting additional needs customers, and increase the accuracy of our records by sharing data with other utilities. Alongside this we ensure customers remain informed throughout their journey with our clear and transparent privacy policy.
Vulnerability strategies	Companies should develop and maintain a vulnerability strategy setting out how they plan to support the extra help needs of their customer base.	We want to make sure customers know what services are available and when they can expect to receive them. Our strategy has been designed by talking directly to our customers, building on their insight and stakeholder feedback, to allow us to develop a greater understanding of the services needed for our customer with additional needs. Our plans set out clearly how we plan to support those that need additional assistance and how these services align with Ofwat’s service for all guidelines.





# Vulnerability strategy timeline

## 2020

Introducing 3 month payment holidays for customers financially impacted by Covid 19.

The launch of Home and Well partnership to support patients transitioning from hospital to home.

Increased the number of vulnerability liaison officers to cover our region from 1 to 3.



## 2021

Launched our Hardship Fund, committing £250,000 to support those most in need with essential white goods and debt write off.

200k worth of food voucher issued to families receiving free school meals in Thanet.



## 2022

Introduction of partnership with Kent County Council to utilise their household support fund to provide up to £250.00 credit on customers bills. £414k awarded across 2 years.

115k worth of food voucher issued to families receiving free school meals in Worthing.

Essentials Social tariff basic discount increased from 20% to 45%.



## 2023

Partnership with UK Power Networks & Scottish and South East Networks to share Priority Services data.

Launch of our Your Water Matters community events.

Kidney Care UK Partnership launched.



## 2024

BS ISO 22458 - BSI Kitemark international accreditation for inclusive standards obtained.

Launch of our new customer friendly website.

Introduction of Money Helper instant debt referral service.



2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
<p>Introduction of Benefits Maximisation tool for financial assistance applications.</p> <p>Onboarding of New Partnership Management role to identify and support key partnerships to support our vision.</p> <p>Increased Hardship support from £250,000 to £1,250,000 (2025-2030).</p> <p>Introduction of Vulnerability Ambassadors within the business.</p> <p>Priority Services Review. We commit to regularly review, assess and conduct gap analysis on our Priority Register Services to ensure we don't just meet but exceed the required standards (2025-2030)</p> <p>Improve on our accessibility options for language interpretation by introducing video relay service for BSL.</p> <p>We will incorporate the Introduction of new GSS standards for priority services into our systems and processes.</p>	<p>Incident Process and communication review.</p> <p>Priority Services Review. We commit to regularly review, assess and conduct gap analysis on our Priority Register Services to ensure we don't just meet but exceed the required standards (2025-2030).</p> <p>Replace expiring meters for those with digital capabilities (2026-2030).</p> <p>Improve on our accessibility options for PSR services by introducing the ability to manage and review PSR services in 'My Account'.</p> <p>Annual strategy review.</p> <p>Improved online functionality for tariff renewal services.</p>	<p>Review of billing process enabling the ability to budget amidst increasing costs.</p> <p>Priority Services Review. We commit to regularly review, assess and conduct Gap analysis on our Priority Register Services to ensure we don't just meet but exceed the required standards (2025-2030).</p> <p>Introduction of new Customer Relationship Management platform.</p> <p>Annual strategy review.</p>	<p>PR29.</p> <p>Priority Services Review. We commit to regularly review, assess and conduct Gap analysis on our Priority Register Services to ensure we don't just meet but exceed the required standards (2025-2030).</p> <p>Annual strategy review.</p> <p>Introduction of new Customer Relationship Management platform.</p>	<p>Refreshed Vulnerability Strategy.</p> <p>PR29.</p> <p>Review of billing process enabling the ability to budget amidst increasing costs.</p> <p>Priority Services Review. We commit to regularly review, assess and conduct Gap analysis on our Priority Register Services to ensure we don't just meet but exceed the required standards (2025-2030).</p>

# Our performance so far

Commitment	Year	Results	Target
Priority Services reach	2020-2021	36,441	
	2021-2022	55,756	
	2022-2023	166,384	
	2023-2024	235,901	
	2024-2025	298,000	
Priority Services reach as a %	2020-2021	2.4	7
	2021-2022	3.7	7
	2022-2023	10.9	7
	2023-2024	15.2	7
	2024-2025	16.0	7
Actual contact	2020-2021	19.8%	17.5%
	2021-2022	32.6%	35.0%
	2022-2023	22.0%	35.0%
	2023-2024	36.4%	35.0%
	2024-2025	38.7%	35.0%
Attempted contact	2020-2021	51.8%	45.0%
	2021-2022	72.5%	90.0%
	2022-2023	112.0%	90.0%
	2023-2024	98.7%	90.0%
	2024-2025	95.3%	90.0%
Customers on Social Tariff	2020-2021	93,874	107,875
	2021-2022	114, 989	117,376
	2022-2023	111,250	125,000
	2023-2024	129,845	128,000
	2024-2025	TBC	155,500

Commitment	Year	Results	Target
Priority Services customer satisfaction score	2020-2021	82%	77%
	2021-2022	82%	81%
	2022-2023	73%	84%
	2023-2024	70%	87%
	2024-2025	68%	90%
% of customers who feel their needs are met	2020-2021	70%	
	2021-2022	74%	
	2022-2023	73%	
	2023-2024	63%	
	2024-2025	66%	
BSI	2023-2024	Achieved	
	2024-2025	Achieved	

## How we created the strategy

Our Customer Vulnerability Strategy is in place to make sure all our customers – including those in vulnerable circumstances – have access to the essential water and wastewater services we provide.

Our strategy was developed by talking directly to our customers in vulnerable circumstances. It means we've been able to develop an even greater understanding of the challenges our customers face, so we can offer the right support when it's needed most.



# Our services are inclusive

## We provide water and wastewater services to over 4.7 million customers, from managing billing queries to providing emergency support.

We have a dedicated team of Here to Help vulnerability experts who work with teams at Southern Water to make sure we're providing the best service for our customers, with accessibility front of mind.

We want to be on hand when our customers need us and this means making sure that they can contact us in a way that suits them, whether that's in their own language or through their preferred channel. We also know that their communication preferences might change, and as new technology becomes available, we need to adapt our services. We currently have a range of options available for our customers to contact us:

- ✓ Phone
- ✓ Email
- ✓ Whatsapp
- ✓ Digital Assistant (webchat)
- ✓ Social Media
- ✓ Through our website
- ✓ Using our Recite Me tool
- ✓ In person in our office
- ✓ In writing.

As part of our commitment to improving accessibility, we're looking at introducing a Video Relay Service to better support British Sign Language users.

When reaching out to our customers we also use a range of channels, depending on their circumstances and preference.

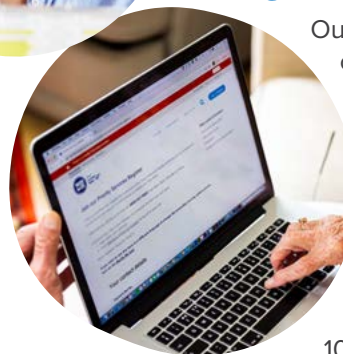
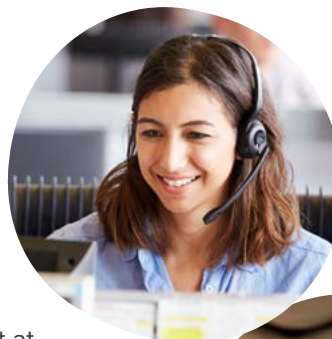
- ✓ SMS
- ✓ Phone
- ✓ Email
- ✓ In writing
- ✓ In person
- ✓ Video triage.

## Customer service

Our Customer teams sit at the heart of our business, acting as the first point of contact for our customers. Whether it's a question about billing, a leak, or a water issue, our teams are on hand to help.

All our colleagues are trained to identify risk factors and vulnerability triggers so they can provide the right support. We understand no situation is the same which is why we've put in place clear processes to give our teams the flexibility to adapt to individual situations. This enables us to find the best possible outcome for the customer. We know this is particularly important when dealing with sensitive topics, such as payment recovery or dissatisfaction.

In July 2024 we also introduced our AI assist tool to help agents capture all triggers and quickly source solutions.



We also work within a Quality Management Framework which allows us to carry out regular checks, to make sure our services are inclusive, consistently accessible and shaped by real feedback.

## Communications

We know how we communicate with our customers makes a big difference, which is why we work hard to make sure our information is easy to understand, written in Plain English and is available in multiple formats. From creating communications in alternative languages to making sure our emails are accessible, we continuously review how we reach out to our customers to make things as easy as possible.

## Digital services

Our digital team is committed to making our services accessible and inclusive. Our website is designed to be customer friendly and easy to use and navigate. Launched in April 2024, the new site is mobile friendly and rated AA, to make sure every customer has the best possible experience. By December 2024, over 1,270,000 customers had visited our website since its launch, with 10% of our customers accessing our Help and Support page. Overall, we have reduced the number of pages on the site, from over 2,000 to 360, making our support services easier to find.



## Our services are inclusive continued

We've made our Priority Services easy to find on our home page, which also includes a link to Help and Support. The home page also includes direct links for customers that may be struggling to pay their bills as well as a signpost to our Here to Help team.

Our accessibility tool Recite Me, means customers can download audio content, change the text or colour theme as well as translate our pages into over 100 languages. We have also made a Digital Assistant available, providing an easily accessible way to chat to us.

For customers who prefer to manage their account online, our 'Your Account' portal allows customers to:

- ✓ Manage their details
- ✓ Pay bills
- ✓ Submit meter readings
- ✓ Track water usage
- ✓ View account information
- ✓ Switch to paperless billing.

As part of our continuous journey to improve accessibility, we're adding new services to 'Your Account', including the ability to renew financial support and register and manage access to Priority Services. This means more customers will be able to access these services at a time that suits them.

### A summary of our services

Accessibility	Assistance	Communication	Financial
Dedicated support line	Meter reading service	Large-print bills	Debt write-off scheme
Talking bill service	Bottled water delivery	Audio bills	Breathing space
Recite Me accessibility tool	Leakage pipe repairs	Third-party communication	Discounted tariffs
Webchat	White goods grants	Alternative language literature	Debt matching scheme
Community events	Water efficiency visits		Capped water charges
Drop-in sessions	Knock and wait service		Payment schemes
Whatsapp	Password scheme		Domestic abuse debt scheme
SMS	Assisted visits		
Video triage			
Telephone payment service			
Online payment tool			
Email			
Online account management			

We understand the needs of our customers can change and the services we offer will need to evolve. To help us do this we work with other organisations within the water industry, such as the Vulnerability Champions Group, to learn and share insights. We're also a member of several cross-sector working groups with other industries such as energy and communication providers to share best practise.

All our services are independently assessed each year to demonstrate that the support we provide is effective and responsive to customer needs. We're proud to meet the requirements of British Standard Institute ISO 22458 Inclusive Services BSI KITEMARK.



# Listening to our customers

As part of our insight 365 programme, we regularly reach out to customers across our region, including those who live in vulnerable circumstances.

During the planning process for our latest Price Review, we ran a deliberative panel (Water Futures Vulnerable) with customers on our Priority Services Register, alongside businesses, household customers and future customers. This allowed us to make connections between audiences when reviewing customer priorities and acceptability testing.

Examples of engagement with vulnerable customers included:

- Regular waves of research looking at our incident management, which included gathering insight and case studies from vulnerable customers to better understand the support they need in an emergency.
- Independent tracking of key measures, such as customer satisfaction and awareness of services, with vulnerable customers via an annual survey (400 customers on our Priority Services Register).
- Engagement with customers on the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, to better understand what additional support and communication we need to provide.

We constantly review our customer demographics and engage with customers experiencing different levels of vulnerability to better understand their individual needs. Differences between groups might include income level, need for different levels of services (bottled water), different ethnicity (relationship with water), language barriers and children in the household. We need to make sure our services are tailored to the individual customer.

To create this strategy, we've triangulated our own insight, as well as that of other water companies and the Consumer Council for Water. We've reviewed feedback from our customer groups and set benchmarks against gold standards of service in the vulnerability space, based on our own data and that provided by our regulators. This process has been independently assured.

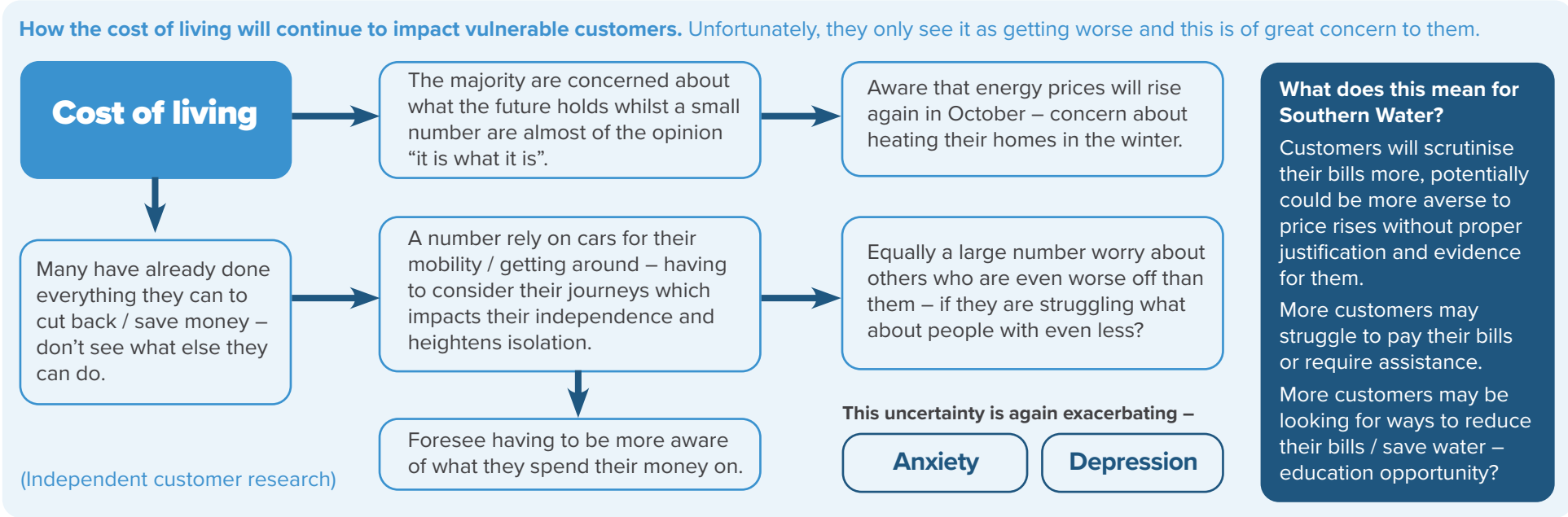


Figure 1: The impact of the cost of living on vulnerable customer

# Our customer needs

We are always running an always on approach to insight and engagement, particularly with our customers in vulnerable circumstances. Our pillars of customer service are key for how we engage vulnerable customers.



Figure 2: Pillars of customer service

“It’s important not just to know about my situation but check every now and then if it has changed, as mine has got worse in recent years.”

*Vulnerable customer*

Everyone is unique and has their own personal circumstances. We’ve identified four different audiences within extra needs:



**Physical vulnerability** – We’re aware that there are vulnerable customers who have mobility issues, their hearing/visually impaired, might be older or seriously ill and it’s essential that we have the capabilities to offer these customers different levels of support at different times.



**Non-physical vulnerability** – We understand that there are customers across our region that have mental health conditions, learning difficulties or socio-behavioural impairments. This can affect people’s ability to access and engage with service providers and our strategy allows us to give the right support at the right time to all audiences.



**Transient vulnerability** – Temporary illness, injury, affordability issues, bereavement, divorce are all things that can affect anyone in life. These can be transitory or longer term and can affect customers’ financial wellbeing and ability to access and manage services.



**Financial vulnerability** – The cost of living is top of mind for everyone. There’s a consensus that bills are increasing, and people are struggling to keep pace. We offer a range of affordability schemes to support those in need.

## Our customers needs continued

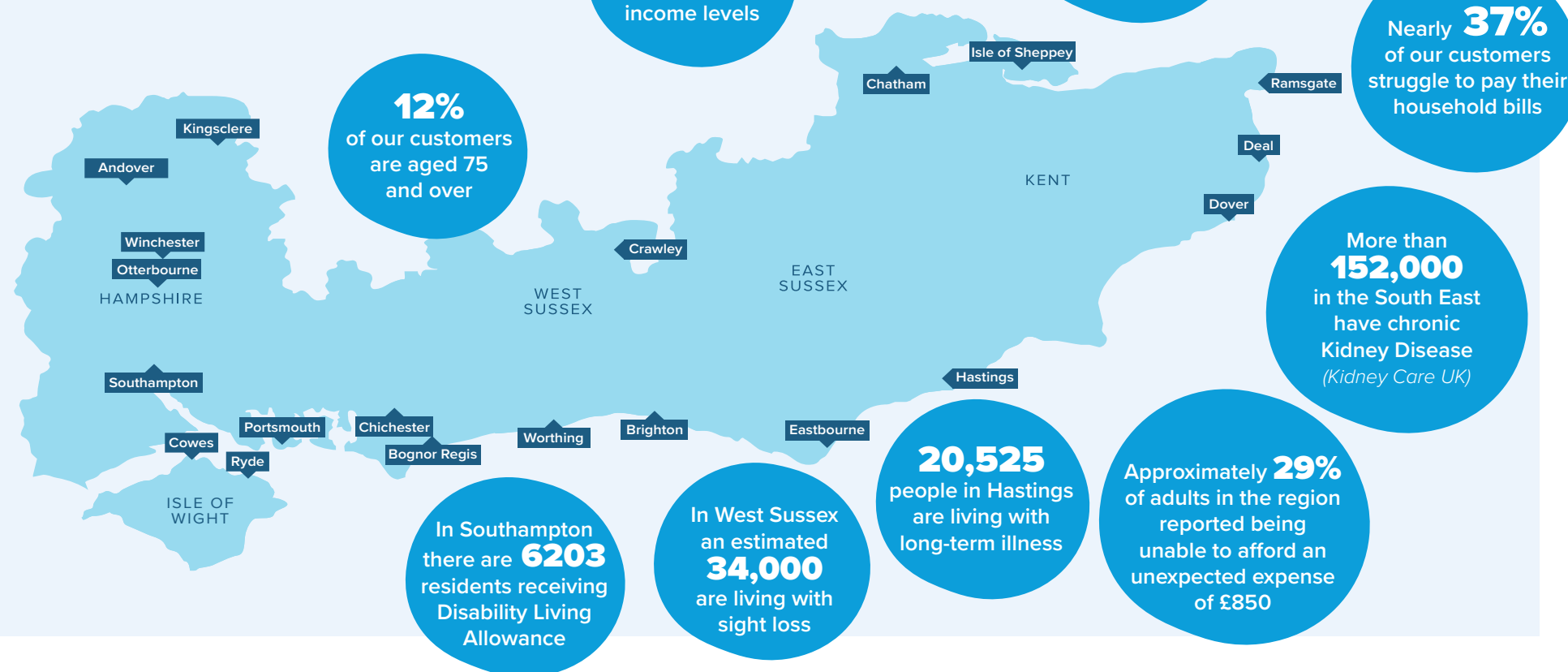
When asked about the biggest challenge in the UK today (data from November 2024), the cost-of-living crisis is most top-of-mind



**Figure 3:** biggest challenge for the UK (1,000 Southern Water Customers, November 2024)

# Understanding our communities

We recognise that vulnerable circumstances include several things such as age, health conditions, financial difficulties and social isolation. Across our region we use statistical data to highlight where our communities may need the most support. Working with key stakeholder partners such as Citizen's Advice, Housing Associations and local charities, we are able to tailor and widen our support.





# Understanding our communities continued

Satisfaction is lowest in communities impacted by incidents related to sewage discharges into the sea – especially where this has led to a beach closure in the past. This includes designated bathing sites in Swalecliffe and the Thanet peninsula. By contrast, our highest levels of satisfaction tend to be inland (North Hampshire and North Sussex). Traditionally, we also see more positive views from Southampton due to higher levels of community engagement around water-saving and drought in this area.

Many of our communities feel their way of life is under threat from the development of new homes, so we see investment in infrastructure to match population growth as a key theme.

Our most diverse communities are found in Southampton and North Kent. In Southampton, there's a large Asian community and in Chatham, Kent, a large Afro/Caribbean community. The Isle of Wight is our least diverse area with 97% white origin. However, we also see an ageing and less affluent population on the island. In North Kent, and within some districts of our larger cities (Southampton, Brighton and Portsmouth), we see communities with greater levels of deprivation. North Hampshire, North Sussex and Central Kent all have larger rural communities.

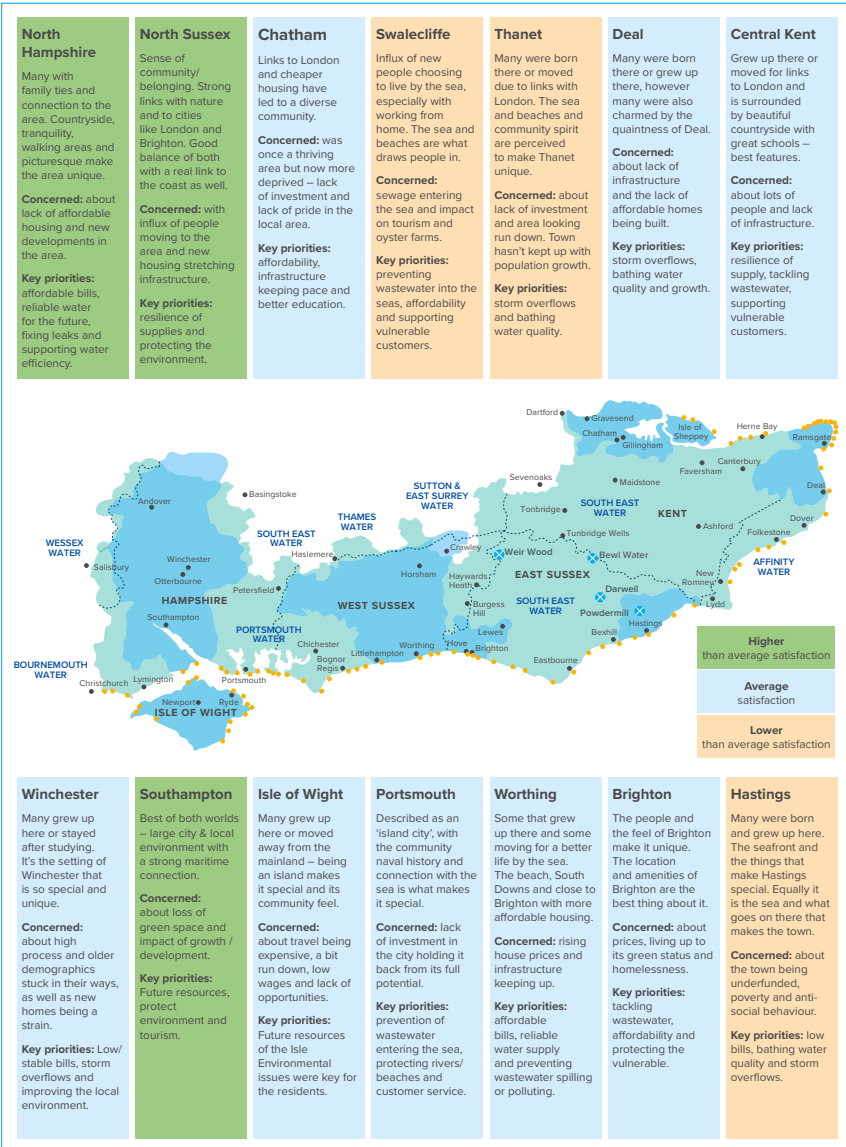
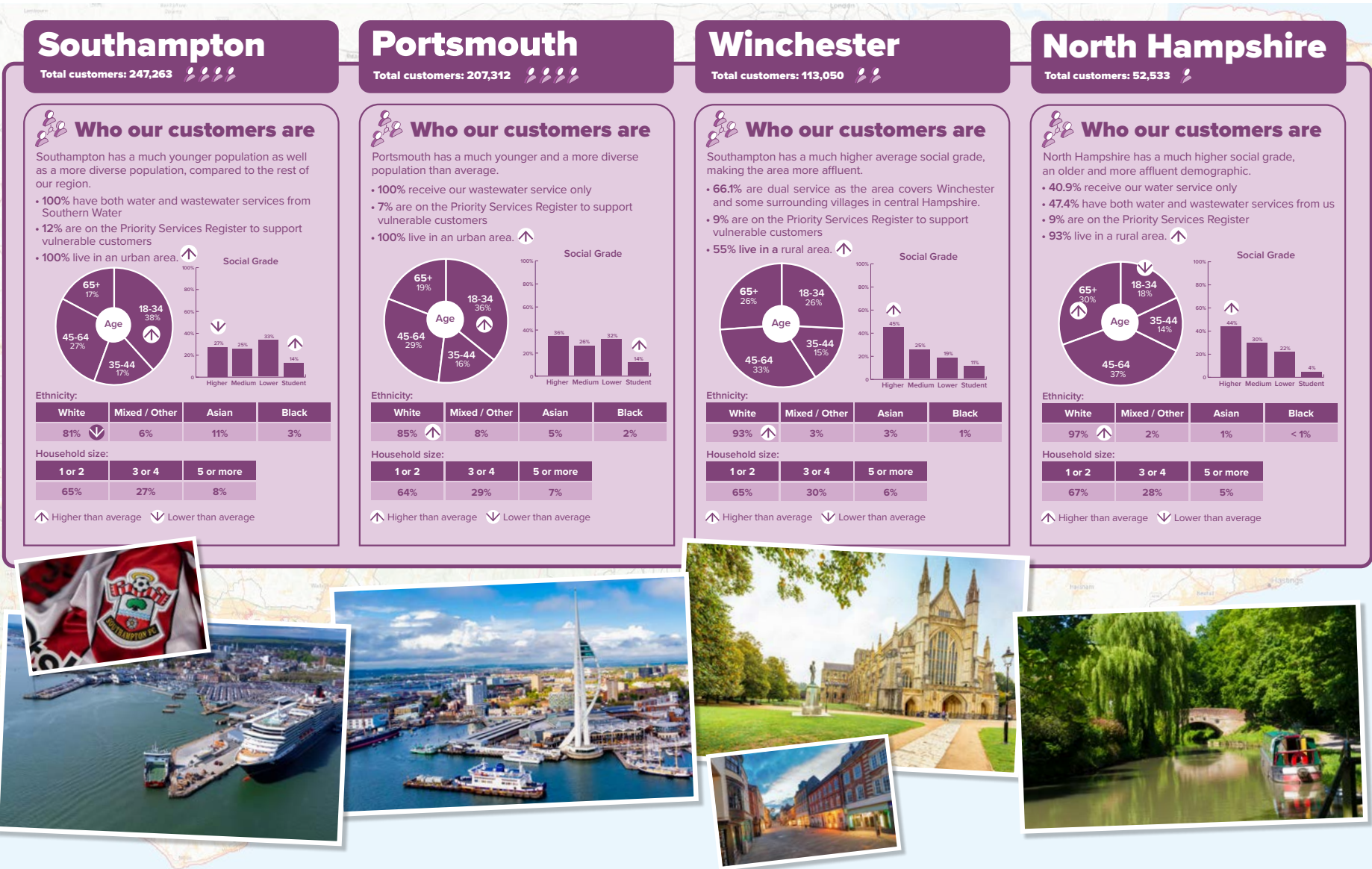


Figure 4: Summary of regional customer concerns and priorities

Understanding our communities continued



# Understanding our communities continued





# Understanding our communities continued

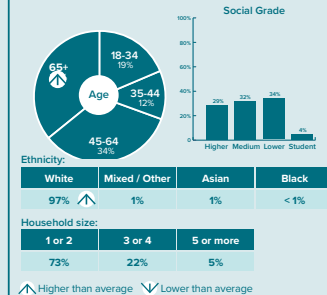
## Isle of Wight

Total customers: 140,078

### Who our customers are

The Isle of Wight has a much higher older population as well as a higher percentage of white residents.

- 93.6% have both water and wastewater services from us
- 18% are on the Priority Services Register to support vulnerable customers
- 70% live in an urban area.



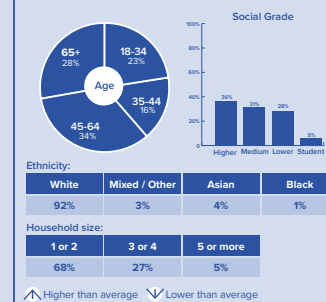
## Worthing

Total customers: 105,650

### Who our customers are

Worthing is an accurate representation of our regional averages.

- 99.9% have both water and wastewater services from us
- 9% are on the Priority Services Register
- 100% live in an urban area.



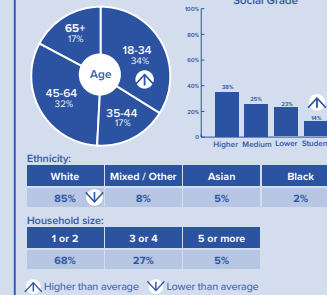
## Brighton

Total customers: 276,805

### Who our customers are

A cosmopolitan area, with diverse and progressive thinking. Brighton has a much younger population, as well as a more diverse community.

- 99.7% have both water and wastewater services from us
- 8% are on the Priority Services Register
- 100% live in an urban area.



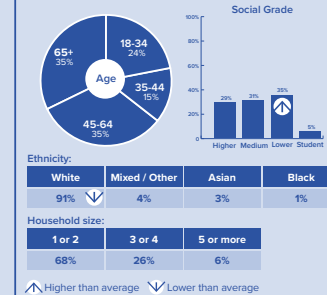
## Hastings

Total customers: 90,787

### Who our customers are

Hastings has an increased need for a Priority Services Register to support vulnerable customers, and a lower than average social grade when compared across our region.

- 99.4% have both water and wastewater services from us
- 17% are on the Priority Services Register
- 100% live in an urban area.



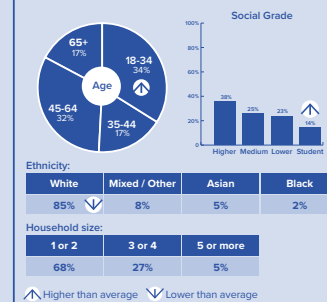
## North Sussex

Total customers: 276,805

### Who our customers are

Made up of lots of towns and villages with a mix of urban and rural.

- 99.7% have both water and wastewater services from us
- 8% are on the Priority Services Register
- 100% live in an urban area.



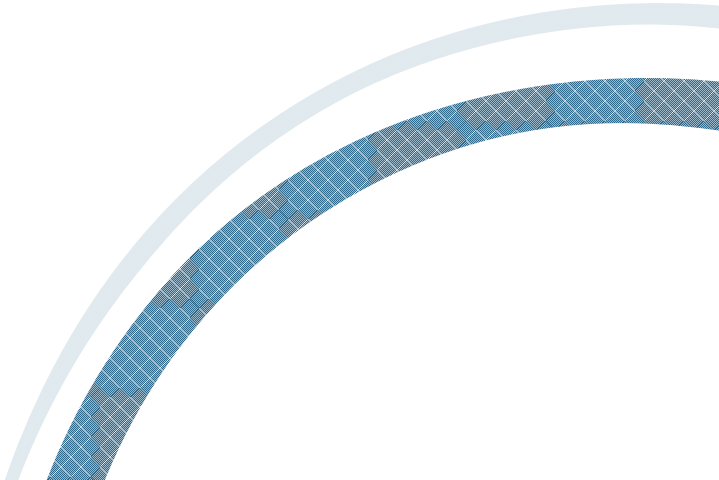
# Building our strategy from our customer insights

Using the Consumer Council for Water’s (CCW) Vulnerability Manifesto as a guide, we commissioned a desk research project with an agency partner, which produced a list of actions we plan to take against a set of key outcomes. This highlighted several recurring themes that we had seen from various deliberative projects and tracking of satisfaction among members of our PSR and our vulnerable customer panel.

Below is a list of dedicated sources used for this summary:

Name	Number of vulnerable customers engaged	Description
PSR tracking satisfaction	400/year	Yearly regulatory tracking of satisfaction of customers who form our PSR
Vulnerable customer panel	20	Panel of vulnerable customers who provided feedback and insight ahead of our Price Review submission
Southern Water PSR desk research 2021	Range of external and internal sources	Desk research looking at industry gold standard for engaging vulnerable customers
Social tariff research	123	Presentation and report
Acceptability and affordability testing (2025-30 Business Plan)	103	Presentation and report

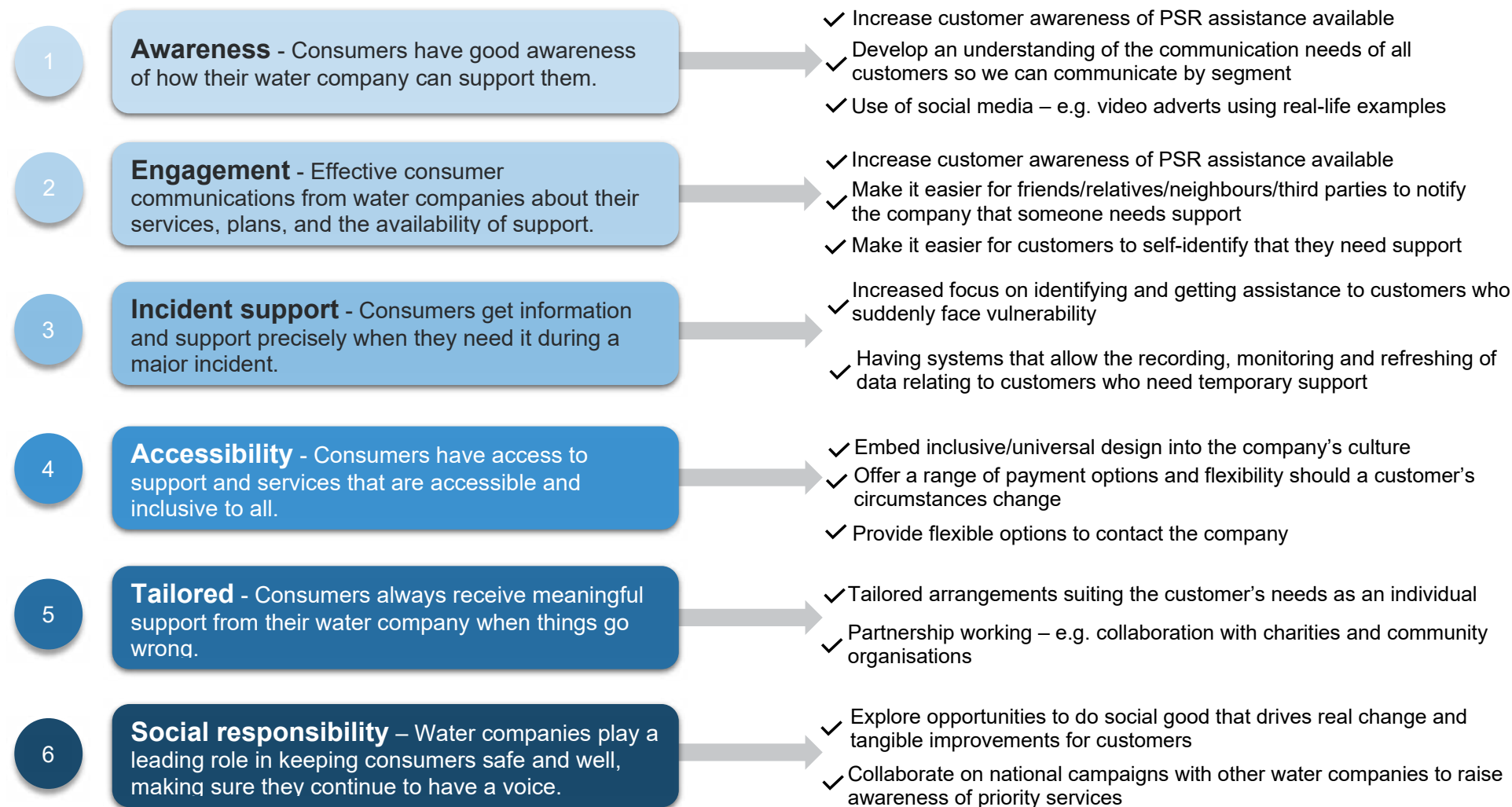
On the next page, we’ve set out the actions we’ll be taking between now and 2030 to improve the support we provide to customers in vulnerable circumstances.





## Building our strategy from our customer insights continued

### Customer insight



## Building our strategy from our customer insights continued

### Using insight to create our vulnerability strategy

To compliment our customer service approach, we’ve created four vulnerability pillars that will underpin how we’ll deliver our strategy and our services.

We’ll begin by increasing our engagement with customers who are already part of our Priority Services Register, while raising awareness among those who might need access to support services.

We’ll work more closely with other organisations to understand our customers’ needs and the different support they’re receiving so we can take a holistic view and improve our services.

Our aim is to provide a tailored individual service that supports our customers when they need it most.

Below we’ve linked key metrics to vulnerability pillars so we can measure the success of the actions we’ve identified:



- 1 2 Increase customer awareness of PSR assistance available
- 1 3 Develop an understanding of the communication needs of all customers in order to be able to communicate by segment
  - 1 Use of social media – e.g. video adverts using real-life examples
- 1 2 4 Make it easier for friends/relatives/neighbours/third parties to notify the company that someone needs support
- 3 4 Make it easier for customers to self-identify that they need support
- 2 3 Increased focus on identifying and getting assistance to customers who suddenly face vulnerability
- 1 3 4 Having systems that are capable of allowing the recording, monitoring and refreshing of data relating to customers who need temporary support
  - 3 Embed inclusive/universal design into the water company’s culture
- 3 4 Offer a range of payment options and flexibility should a customer’s circumstances change
- 1 3 Provide flexible options to contact the company
  - 3 Tailored arrangements suiting the customer’s needs as an individual
- 2 Partnership working – e.g. water companies collaboration with charities and community organisations
- 1 2 Explore opportunities to do social good that drives real change and tangible improvements for customers through their vulnerable world
- 2 4 Participate in national collaborations with other water companies to raise awareness of priority services using campaigns

Figure 5: How our insight informs our Vulnerability Pillars

# Where we are today

## Vulnerability outreach

We engage directly with those in need through our outreach work, attending community events, support surgeries, and local drop-in centres. We want to make our services as accessible as possible.

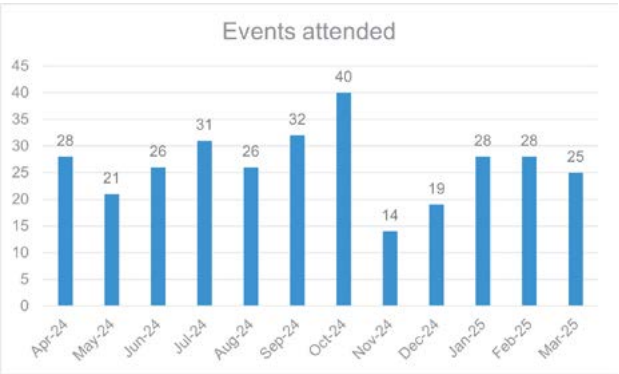
Our Vulnerability Liaison Officers are part of our dedicated Here To Help team, and they work to build trusted relationships within their local communities. Each officer has developed their own strategy using customer insight, national statistics, and the support and knowledge of our stakeholders to deliver targeted outreach campaigns.

Meet the team:



Each team member works closely with multiple stakeholders across their region, building relationships and raising awareness of the support we have to offer.

During 2024, the team were able to attend more than 300 events to share information on the services we have available.



Sussex 163  
Kent 89  
Hampshire 78

The support we offer varies with the seasons, so during the winter customers might find us at events such as 'Warm and Welcome'. These are run by local libraries to help people with the cost of living, providing a safe, friendly environment where our team, and other organisations, can meet customers and offer them support. This might be getting them signed up to one of our discounted tariffs to reduce their bill, applying for our Hardship Fund or signing up to our Priority Services Register.

## 1 Engaging

As well as attending community events the team will work with stakeholders such as Job Centre Plus, to arrange individual appointments with customers who may benefit from some extra help. These face-to-face private appointments can provide welcome relief for those that may have built up debt or recently experienced a change in their circumstances.

Our Vulnerability Liaison Officers receive the same enhanced training as our dedicated office-based staff, as well as completing additional courses such as basic sign language.

The team also helps to raise awareness of the support we have to offer by hosting workshops, presentations and webinars. We also share our materials with local stakeholders so they can distribute them within their own organisations.

"I just want to say working with you and the team, has been greatly beneficial for Citizens Advice Medway Debt team, we have been able to obtain a true picture of what the clients owe, we have been informed about different plans available for our clients, which financially benefits our clients. We have managed to have several accounts removed, due to applying for a write off for different reasons – previously unknown to either client or case worker".  
- **Citizen's Advice Medway**

“It has proved invaluable to have a specific team to refer stroke clients to for support. Some working age stroke survivors have struggled significantly with finance and have fallen into or at risk of falling into debt. In addition, having cognitive impairments post stroke has reduced their ability to manage their affairs. The support and advice given by the team has had a positive impact on financial and emotional wellbeing” – **Stroke Association Support Co-ordinator.**

“I cannot tell you how you have literally changed her life, a huge weight lifted. She said from the start of the call, professional, caring and supportive. She said it was ‘immense’ and is so grateful to me for referring her. Never stop being you because you are fabulous, and you make such a difference to customers lives. Thank you, wish everyone I signposted to was as efficient as you!!” – **Job Centre Plus Work Coach.**

Our Vulnerability Liaison Officers work closely with other teams to support our Priority Services customers, providing friendly, knowledgeable assistance during home visits.



Figure 6: Your Water Matters Event

Your Water Matters

Our customers have told us that they would like to know more about the support we offer, how we’re investing their money and protecting our environment. That’s why we launched our Your Water Matters events. From providing support with affordability and Priority Services, to understanding how water is treated and supplied and what we’re doing to reduce storm overflows, these events are part of our commitment to transparency, support and action.

“It was all absolutely spot-on. So just keep doing what you are doing. Pioneering.”  
*Customer from Lancing*

Held in communities throughout the South East, these events allow customers to meet our teams, learn more about the challenges we face, and discover how we’re working together to make sure we all have water for life.

Our insight informs the location of these events. We advertise them in advance via social media, email, local news/media, and we also send letters to customers in the area – everyone is welcome. We also invite members of local authorities and parliament to attend the events to meet our customers with us.

We review the feedback from these events to understand how we can improve the services and information we provide to our customers.

1 Engaging

Event	Date
Hastings	Oct '23
Whitstable	Jan '24
Southampton	Mar '24
Horsham	May '24
Hastings	Sep '24
Lancing	Sep '24
Thanet	Nov '24

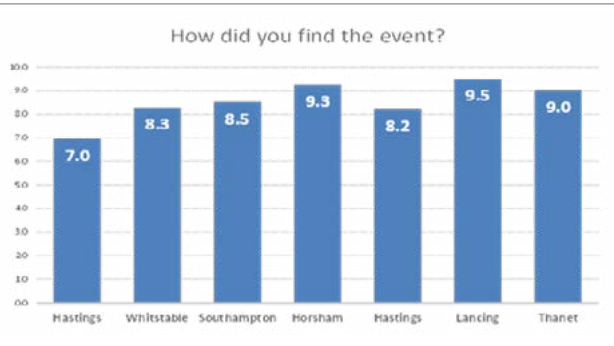


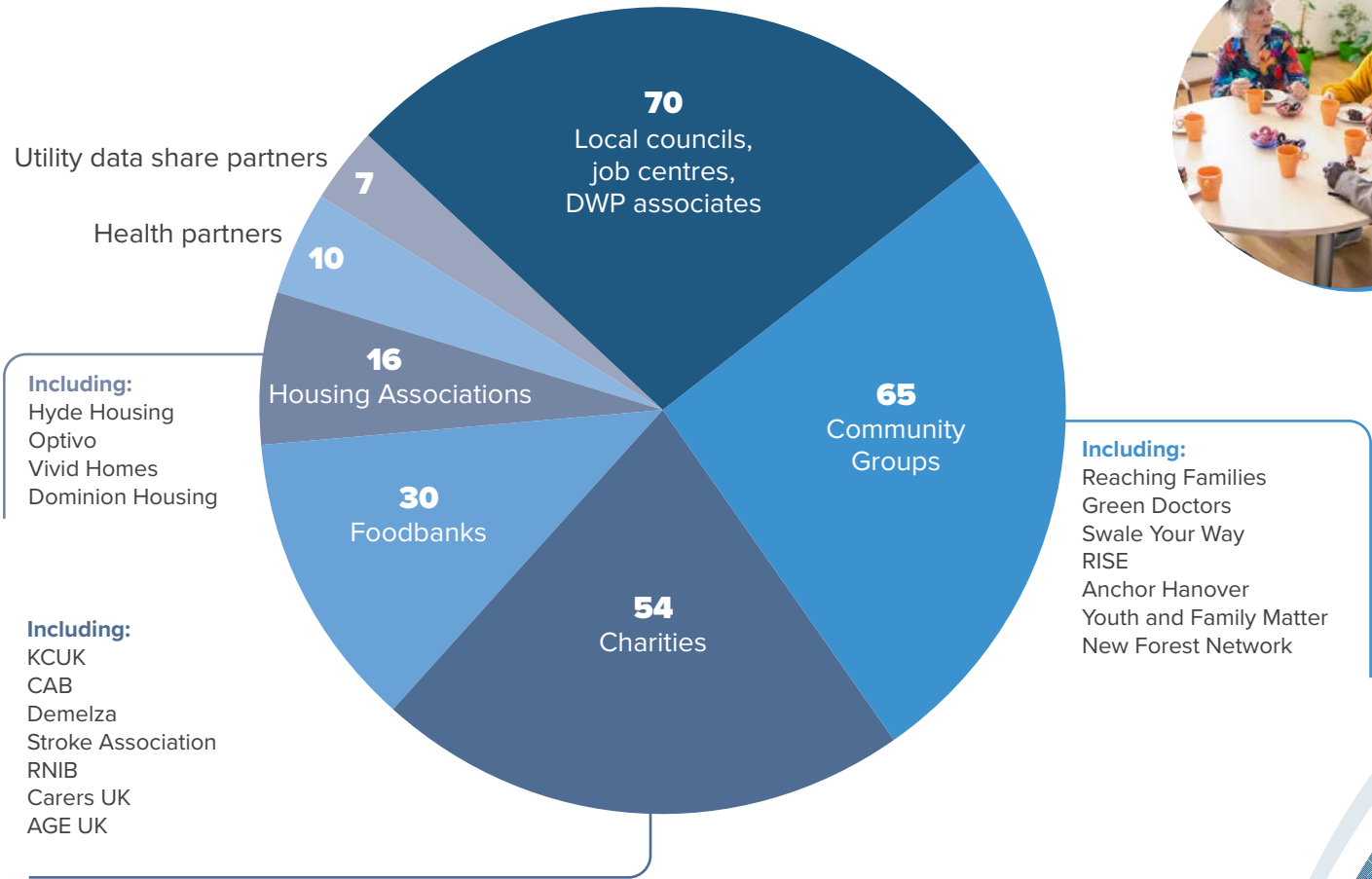
Figure 7: Feedback from Your Water Matters Events (overall satisfaction, out of 10)

“Would like more events like this. An event where we can listen.”

Working together

Partnerships with other organisations who offer specialist support to our customers, gives us access to subject matter experts as well as bespoke training and advice for our own colleagues.

The knowledge and expertise shared by our partners allows us to provide a more tailored service to our customers in need. We're proud to work with over 250 organisations, extending our reach and raising awareness of our services and support.





### Stakeholder case study – RISE Kent

**RISE is a multi-agency partnership set up to address underlying barriers to finding and maintaining accommodation for rough sleepers in Thanet**



RISE work to support clients with any needs they have including drug or alcohol dependency and maximising their finances, helping clients to secure long term housing.

We work closely with RISE to offer support for those entering accommodation after sleeping rough – many of them for the first time. A lot of these people will have extra needs, such as a mental health diagnosis or health issues, so we'll make them aware of our Priority Services Register. We also make sure that they are on the right tariff – offering them a minimum of 45% discount on their water bills – as well as setting them up with an affordable payment plan.

We can also support these customers with the purchase of white goods and essential household items such as a bed or carpets, to provide a more sustainable environment and improve overall wellbeing.

Nathan Pressley RISE Landlord Liaison Officer say's "I generally deal with all the referrals made into Southern Water from RISE and have found the relationship to be an extremely positive and helpful one. I have built a very good relationship with their Vulnerability Liaison Officer Chelsi and find her to be very helpful. A lot of the clients we refer have vulnerabilities including mental health diagnosis and anytime any member of staff have spoken to them, they have only had good words to say about her and how she has spoken to them".

Over the past two years we've been able to support over 200 people with discounts on their bill or additional Priority Services. In addition, we have provided 28 items of essential white goods or furniture helping to create a more comfortable and secure living environment for our customers.

RISE referred me to yourselves for support. You helped sort out my water bills, set up my direct debit and complete the white goods application over the phone. The process was so simple and easy. The washing machine I had before I could no longer use as it was worn and shook the whole building! The new one is brilliant and easy to use.



I would likely of had to try and save up for a really long time to get a working washing machine without the support of RISE and Southern Water. RISE Client.

Other partnerships with key organisations such as Citizens Advice and local housing authorities mean customers can easily access our services when facing sudden challenges or a change in circumstances.



## Home and Well Hampshire

We've worked closely with Citizens Advice Hampshire to support their Home and Well project. The partnership provides funding for specially trained advisors to support residents with Priority Service applications and water and energy advice, making sure they are prepared to return home after a hospital visit.

The project carries out hospital visits as well as receiving referrals from both the NHS and non-NHS agencies to offer their support to clients.

Since the beginning of the partnership in 2020, the project has been able to support more than 8,800 people, with over 7,300 added to priority services registers across the energy and water sector. The project has also helped us to get 3,000 customers on to one of our social tariff discounts.

**7,300**

Priority Service  
sign ups

**3,027**

tariff  
applications

**8,800**

clients  
supported

"The client was initially referred to Home and Well for benefit advice. Following a benefits check, the adviser was able to assist the client with a claim for pension credit. The client was already on the Priority Services Register (PSR) for his electricity and gas, but not for water. The adviser was able to add him onto the PSR for his water, for which he was very grateful. The adviser was also able to get the client added onto the Southern Water Essentials tariff, saving him 45% off his future water bills. He was very pleased, as this was giving him a saving of £8.55 a month" – Home and Well adviser.

Working together we have been able to support Home and Well with project literature, to promote the service, meaning their advisers are able to distribute information about the project throughout the region.



## Kidney Care UK

In May 2023 we entered a partnership with Kidney Care UK, to support over 150,000 individuals affected with chronic kidney disease within our region. Through the initiative, we aim to provide tailored support to more than 3,000 individuals currently undergoing dialysis within our network. Since the start of the partnership, we have seen an increase in sign-ups to our Priority Services Register for dialysis patients from around 100 to 350. While our partners have spoken to over 6,000 patients about our services. Our work together has allowed us to attend rental units, (medical units for kidney dialysis patients) providing first-hand experience of patients undergoing treatment. We've also been able to introduce an incident response process for those needing to perform home dialysis, including using Kidney Care UK's social media and renal unit network to highlight when there is a water supply issue.

As we look to the future, Kidney Care UK's Patient Advocacy Support Officers and our own Vulnerability Liaison Officers will join forces, sharing training opportunities, so we can continue to support each other's work.



## Financial

These partnerships have also allowed us to share data, as well as resources and expertise, enabling us to better target our financial support where it is needed most. We now have data agreements in place with third parties such as local authorities, housing associations and charities to enable us to auto-enrol people onto our support schemes and tariffs.

For example, since September 2024, we've been working together with local authorities to create an auto enrolment initiative for residents that may be eligible for our social tariff. They provide us with details of residents on low incomes or benefits and we automatically move customers onto our Essentials tariff, providing them with a minimum discount of 45% on their bills. By March 2025, we were partnered with four local authorities, allowing us to support over 16,000 additional customers with a discount on their bill, offering a total saving of more than £4 million pounds.

Once enrolled, we write to customers to let them know about the partnership, what it means for them and what they need to do to receive support in the future. Data is used strictly for the purpose of benefiting eligible residents.

“By sharing information directly with Southern Water, our team has helped thousands of our residents to get instant money off their water bills without them having to lift a finger. Our Proactive staff will continue to work hard to identify anyone else that becomes eligible.”

**Cllr Lee Cowen Adur's cabinet member for housing and citizen services.**

We'll continue to work closely with other local authorities in our region to support those who might be experiencing financial difficulty, without them having to reach out directly, making our services as inclusive as possible.

In December 2024, we launched our partnership with the Money Advice Network, provided by Money and Pensions Service, a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Work and Pensions. This service allows our colleagues to refer customers for immediate, confidential and independent debt advice within three minutes of finishing their call with us. Customers can also access the service via our website, offering them easy access to possible debt solutions.



## Here to help

Customers needing extra support have priority access to our dedicated Here to Help team, offering specialist support, advice and signposting. Over the past year the team responded to over 11,500 calls through our dedicated line, providing a friendly and sensitive service to customers at a time they really need it.

Using our freephone number or dedicated email address, those that need extra help can speak to one of the team directly. Our team can provide individual case management and are never 'targeted' with their calls, meaning they always have the time to listen and understand how we can help.

Alongside our own internal training framework, including safeguarding and information handling, the team receive enhanced training from our partners, charity organisations and external training providers.



## Understanding autism training

People with autism represent one of many diverse groups of customers that may require tailored support to ensure our services are inclusive and accessible. Training provided by the National Autistic Society has strengthened our understanding and equipped our team with practical approaches to tailor our assistance. The training helped provide a deeper understanding of how autistic people may experience our services and equipped the team with practical strategies to offer better ways to interact and communicate.

'I attended to help make our communication more accessible to neuro-divergent audiences, the training was clear and articulate from someone who is clearly passionate about their subject'.

"I found the training incredibly insightful, and I can already see how the information shared could help us provide a more inclusive service for our customers".

"The training was fantastic, knowledgeable, engaging, motivating and very inspiring, it has made me want to learn more outside of work".



Throughout the year our team have gained valuable skills from organisations including:





**Here are just some of the services the team can help with:**

**Priority Services support** – Providing information on joining the register, advising on the services available and how to access support, as well as what this looks like and when we'll reach out to make contact.

**Emergency support** – Our team are on hand during water supply outages to provide dedicated support, assisting both customers on the Priority Services Register and those with emerging needs. The team will gather and direct information from those with emerging needs to our emergency planning team and arrange for water delivery where needed.



**Financial assistance application** – The team have an in-depth knowledge of the financial assistance available and will always make sure the most beneficial tariff is offered, dependent on a customer's individual situation.

**Payment plans** – If customers are having difficulty paying their bill, the team can talk through the options available and set up affordable payment plans and alternative ways to pay.



#### **Hardship Fund applications**

– The team will empathetically guide customers through the application process, listening with understanding and providing case by case management from application to outcome.

**Breathing Space scheme** – A government initiative to allow customers time to get debt advice and support, our team will let customers know when this initiative starts and when it is finishing, as well as reaching out to offer support with payment management going forward.

**Bereavement services** – The team will guide customers through this sensitive journey providing a single point of contact where needed and signpost customers to relevant services if they need additional support.

“Nobody else has gone out of their way like this to help me. I am autistic, registered disabled with lots of debilitating health conditions, and on the Priority Services Register. I have no income of my own except that from benefits. People mostly do as little as they can - they don't really go further to help people like me. But Creah not only understood my financial plight, she sympathised in a genuine way, was very sensitive to my disabilities (whilst not patronising me) and helped me secure not only an account credit refund, but also a large discount related to the Essentials tariff to relieve me from paying the terrible 47% price rise due to take effect this tax year. She did this without fuss and with utmost courtesy. She is a credit to herself, and her department and you should be proud. If everyone was like her the world would be a happier place.”

*Customer feedback*





“Thank you so much for your quick response and taking the time for your detailed reply. I really appreciate it, taking into consideration my anxiety. You’ve made me feel so much better and I am forever grateful for this. I hope my response can be classed as a compliment specifically directed to you for your customer service. I know how a lot of the time it’s all complaints and not all sunshine and rainbows, so I just want to say thank you again you’ve exceeded my expectations with your reply and want you to know the relief you’ve provided. Keep up the good work!”

*Customer*



## Financial support to suit changing needs

Our range of financial support is designed to provide options to suit the changing needs of our customers. This tailored support includes a discount of at least 45% on future bills, as well as providing grants for essential white goods.

During the COVID-19 crisis, we reached out to all household customers, adjusting tariff criteria to reduce financial burdens. This was part of a support package to help those hit hardest by the rising cost of living, showing our commitment to water affordability through discounts and support mechanisms. This initiative included increasing bill discounts for 104,000 households from 20% to 45%, providing at least £200 in annual savings on dual service bills for an additional 21,000 households, and offering discounts of up to 90% for those in greatest need.

**WaterSure** – can cap water bills for those with a water meter. Customers may be eligible for a reduction in their water rates if they have a low income, have a water meter at their property and meet the following criteria:

- Someone living in the household is receiving a means tested benefit and
- Someone in the household is responsible for three or more children under 19 in full time education who also live in the property.
- A child or person receiving the benefit or tax credit have a specified medical condition requiring the use of more water than normal.

**Essential** – Our Essentials tariff is designed to help customers who are struggling to pay their water services charges. It provides a discount of at least 45% increasing up to 90% in some circumstances, on future bills as well as a low-income pensioner discount. Customers will qualify for our Essentials tariff if:

- they have a household income of less than £22,020 (excluding Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance or Personal Independence Payments) and have savings of less than £16,000
- everyone in the household receives pension credits.

**Water Direct** – Jobcentre Plus customers can choose to pay us directly from their benefits, allowing them to reduce stress often associated with budgeting. Customers can apply for Water Direct if:

- they are receiving eligible benefits
- they have at least £50 arrears

**NewStart Debt support** – NewStart can help customers pay off their water bill debt if they have an outstanding balance and haven't made a payment in a while.

More information about our payment schemes and how to apply can be found here [What If I Can't Pay My Bill?](#)

We understand recent bill increases and the cost of living continue to impact our customers, and we want our support to reach as many people as possible.

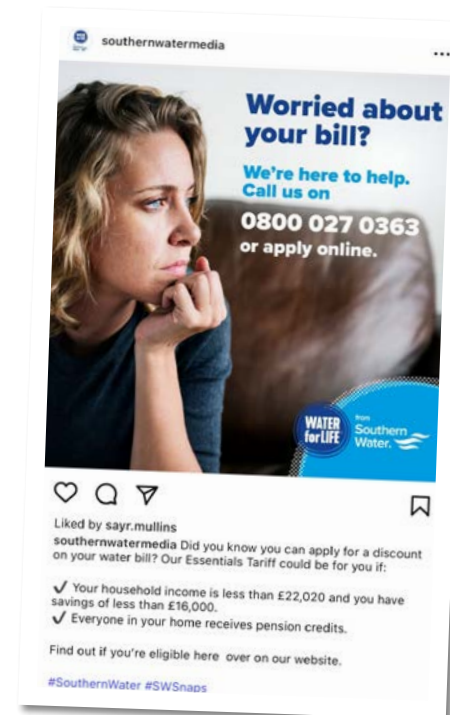
## 3

## Tailored Service

## Promotion of our schemes and tariffs

To further increase awareness of the support we offer, we regularly campaign on our social media platforms Facebook, X and Instagram, to show customers how we can help.

Our engagement work in our communities is also focused on highlighting the financial support available to customers and our Vulnerability Liaison Officers and teams at our Your Water Matters events can register customers there and then to receive support.



## Priority Service Registers

Our register makes sure those in vulnerable circumstances have access to priority services, particularly during a water supply outage. Our Priority Services are free to access, and by joining our register people get access to extra support or advice when it's needed most.

While some people may need continued support with one or more of our services, such as those needing home dialysis, others may need help for a short period of time, such as those experiencing temporary life changes. We know that 'one size does not fit all'.

**Training our staff** – We use a blended learning approach to make sure our colleagues are equipped with the right skills, using multiple platforms from online courses and in person training to business and community workshops.

As part of our onboarding package, every employee receives information about the Priority Services Register and the services available. They also have access to additional online learning alongside completing our mandatory training framework – which has a 95% completion rate.

Colleagues who will visit customers in their homes receive safeguarding training, as well as guidance about how to identify any additional needs.

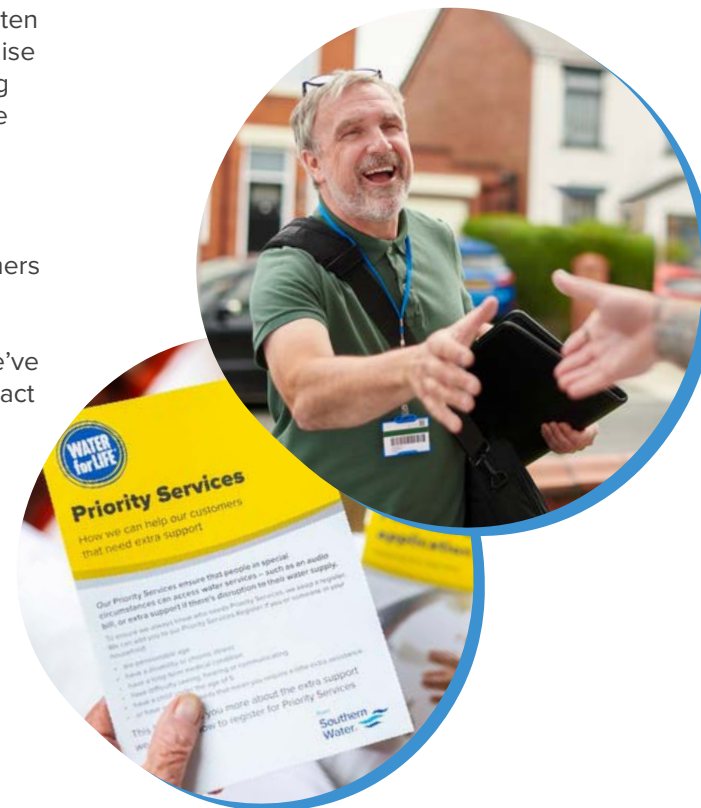
This could be as straightforward as making sure they present clear identification and take a step back when arriving at someone's front door, or as complex as understanding how to tailor services to individual circumstances.

We train our call centre colleagues to actively listen and look for signs of additional needs, as well raise awareness of our Priority Service Register during calls. This knowledge-based training programme means customers receive an empathetic and sensitive service.

Our Quality Framework allows us to monitor the success of engagement with our eligible customers over the phone. During 2024 we reviewed over 4,000 customer calls, with over 98% of calls recognising or raising awareness of the PSR. We've also deployed Agent Assist Gen AI into our contact centre to collect and summarise past calls. This information helps agents respond more accurately, understand intent and root cause, providing troubleshooting information during the call.

We continuously monitor completion rates of our policies training framework, as well as using our employee engagement surveys to identify additional training needs.

We're also launching our Vulnerability Ambassador programme in 2025. These ambassadors, along with our dedicated Here to Help team, will receive bespoke training from our key partners and stakeholders. By gathering feedback and tracking participation through the programme, we'll be able increase the reach of our current training programmes.





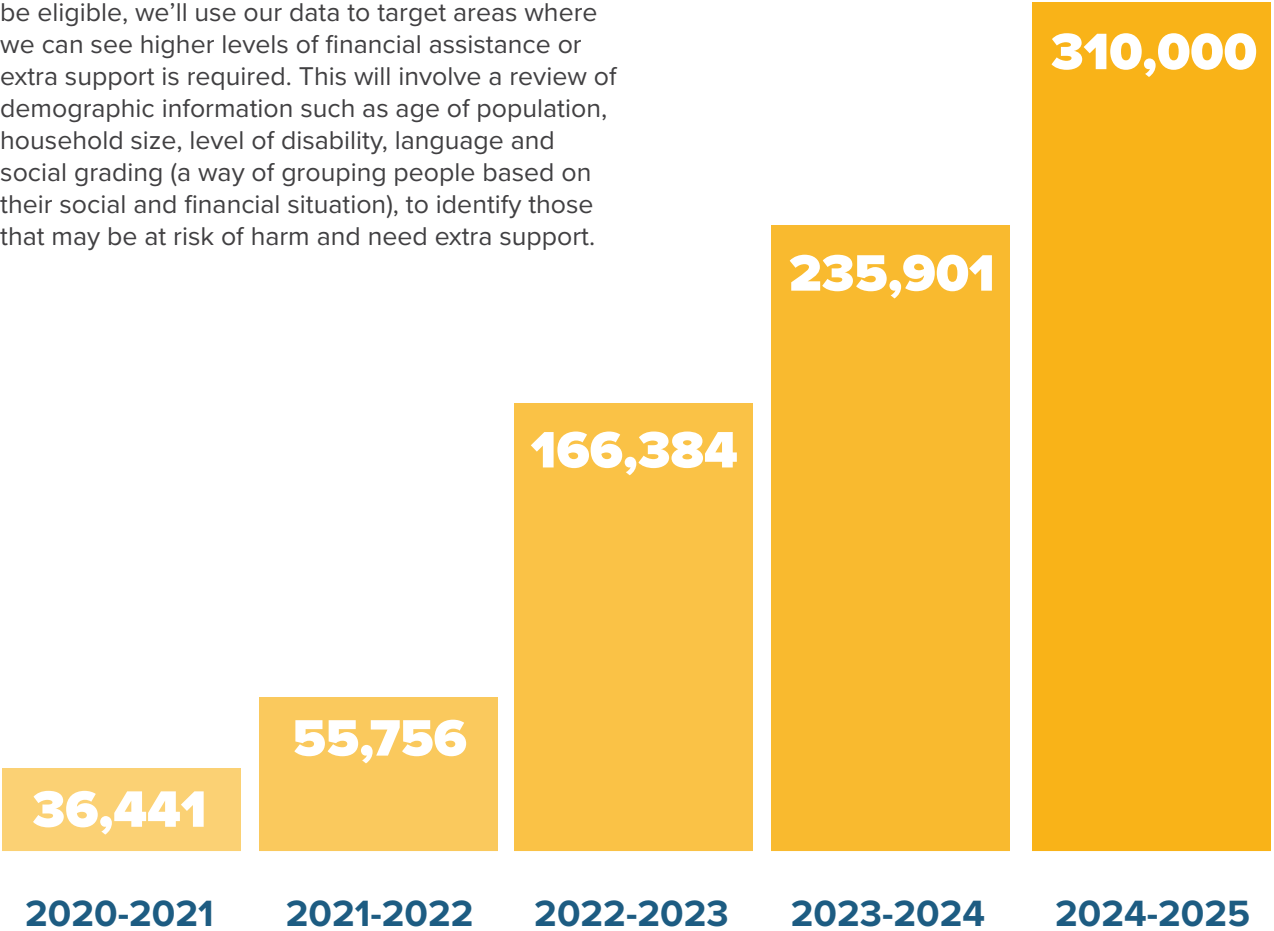
**Improving awareness of priority services –**  
Since 2020 Our customers have experienced unprecedented challenges and uncertainty, including a global pandemic, a sustained cost-of-living crisis, and continued global unrest. We understand during challenging periods there is increased requirement for additional support. Since 2020, our Priority Services Register has grown from just over 36,000 to over 310,000.

We expect this number to continue to grow. Our regulator Ofwat recently published their review of current standards – Priority Services Register standards - which estimated that nearly 50% of customers will be eligible to join a register at some point within their lifetime.

We're aiming to support more than  
**500,000**  
customers by 2030

With over 310,000 customers currently supported on our PSR, we currently reach over 16% of those eligible. We're aiming to improve the reach of our services by an additional 2% each year, supporting more than 500,000 customers by 2030, which is 26% of those eligible.

To make sure we continue to identify those that may be eligible, we'll use our data to target areas where we can see higher levels of financial assistance or extra support is required. This will involve a review of demographic information such as age of population, household size, level of disability, language and social grading (a way of grouping people based on their social and financial situation), to identify those that may be at risk of harm and need extra support.






Case study – Thanet

Following a review of our demographic data, we’ve identified Thanet as an area that may need extra support.

Currently only 17% of customers here are registered for priority services. Using our data, we plan to run targeted awareness raising campaigns in the area, alongside increasing our community engagement and direct mail campaigns.





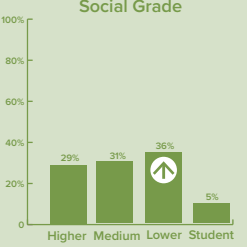
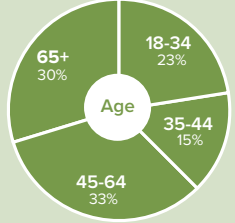
Data	Statistics	Focus
Lower social grading	36%	We know that areas considered to have a high proportion of lower social grading are likely to be impacted by concerns such as higher levels of pollution, limited healthcare resources and social isolation, all of which are known to increase the likelihood of experiencing a health-related issue. We'll target our support to make sure we increase the reach to those that may need extra help.
Aged 65+	30%	We know accessing water services can be more challenging for customers of pensionable age, including digital exclusion and reduced ability to travel. There are many ways we can support customers over the age of 65 and by tailoring our outreach work, we can increase awareness of the services available.
Household size	6% 5 or more	Our household data can be used to help us identify eligibility for extra support. Households of five or more are more likely to include large families with young children or older relatives, both of which can be impacted significantly by a water supply outage. We can use their information to increase awareness of our Priority Services Register.



### Who we are

Thanet has a much high percent of customers on the PSR register and a slightly below average social grade.

- 97.5% are dual service
- 19% are on the PSR 
- 94% urban 





Ethnicity:

White	Mixed / Other	Asian	Black
93%	4%	2%	< 1%

Household size:

1 or 2	3 or 4	5 or more
69%	26%	6%

 Higher than average  Lower than average

Community	Rationale	Priority areas
Deal	Community with similar to average demographics to the region	2
Brighton	Large communities with similar to average demographics to the region	2
Central Kent	Large communities with similar to average demographics to the region	2
Hastings	Higher levels of deprivation compared to the entire region	1
Isle of Wight	Higher levels of deprivation and older average demographic compared to the entire region	1
Medway	Highest levels of deprivation compared to the entire region	1
North Hampshire	A lower level of deprivation than average for the region	3
North Sussex	A lower level of deprivation than average for the region	3
Portsmouth	Large communities with similar to average demographics to the region	2
Southampton	Large communities with similar to average demographics to the region	2
Thanet	Some high levels of transient communities and areas of deprivation	1
Winchester	A lower level of deprivation than average for the region	3
Worthing	Community with similar to average demographics to the region	2

By working with trusted partners such as Age UK, Citizen’s Advice and Kidney Care UK, we can make use of additional support networks and combined expertise in identifying vulnerability. By working with these partners, we’re also providing customers with the additional reassurance of a familiar name. During 2024 we were able to reach over 45,000 customers with additional needs through our trusted partners.

Working closely with other water and energy providers is also key, as it means customers only have to register for priority services with one supplier. We’re looking to develop a consistent and collective approach to cross-sector data sharing.

To engage directly with those in need, our Vulnerability Liaison Officers, see page 23, work with local charities and attend community events within their region to promote our support. With each team member using their own experiences, customer insight and statistical data to develop knowledge-based strategies, we can identify those that need us most and deliver our wide range of support in their area.

We also use social media to promote our Priority Services Register. By pro-actively using platforms such as Instagram, X and Facebook, we can highlight the support we have available and target large and diverse audiences.

Through these platforms in 2024, we were able to reach 28 million customers.



Alongside our digital campaigns we publish bi-monthly electronic newsletters, which are sent to around one million customers. Our newsletters provide updates on our business plans, any upcoming projects and allow us to share details of our support packages and how to access them.

We know there’s still more to be done and we’ve set ourselves an ambitious target of 75% of our customers being aware of the support we offer by 2030. To help us achieve this, we plan to run targeted campaigns, alongside reviewing our existing communications and carrying out a review of how we measure the support we provide.

## Joining our PSR

It's easy for customers to join our Priority Services Register and also for friends or family members to register their loved ones.

Our website, rated with 'strong accessibility', is easy to navigate, with customers only needed to click once to access support. Details of our Priority Services Register, and the services offered, are easy to find, along with additional assistance including our financial support packages. Requests to be added to our register can also be made directly through our trusted partners.

**Completing a form** – we have made it easy to complete freepost forms in multiple languages. These are distributed by our trusted partners and stakeholders, in local community centres and at events, as well as through our community outreach teams.

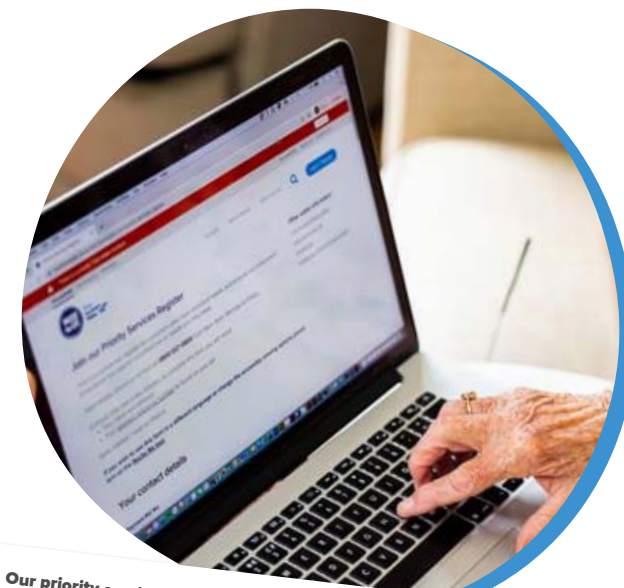
**Telephone** – All of our telephone agents are trained to promote and sign people up to our priority register, as well as talk through the services available.

**Data partners** – To help minimise the number of times customers must declare extra help needs, we work with trusted partners, including energy distribution networks, to make sure our priority services are as comprehensive as possible. The lawful basis of 'substantial public interest' allows us to support our customers directly through data share agreements, meaning we can provide as many customers as possible with the support they need. To find out how we use your data please read our privacy policy.

## What happens next

Once we receive an application we'll update our records with the necessary information. This enables us to understand what support is needed. We then write to those that have registered to let them know they're now a priority, explaining the services they can expect from us.

We know that people's circumstances change, so we contact customers every two years to check that our records are up to date and that we're providing the right kind of additional support.





## What does the Priority Service Register mean for you?

There are a range of services that customers can access once they are on the PSR. These include:

- **A dedicated support line** – Our Here to Help team is trained to offer specialist support, advice and signposting for those that need additional assistance. Our freephone number Extra Help And Support - Southern Water connects customers directly to one of the team.
- **Regular meter readings** – If customers struggle to find or read their water meter, we can arrange for regular readings to be done for them.
- **Alternative communication methods** – To make sure that all customers have accessible information on their bill we offer talking or audio bills, large print, braille or digital bills.
- **Leaking pipe repaired for free** – Depending on where the leak is we may be able to fix it for free. Our engineers are trained to recognise situations which they feel may impact a customer's ability to complete essential repairs and can complete requests to offer support where they feel it's needed.
- **Third party support** – If someone finds it difficult to handle, read or understand their bills they can choose to have them sent to someone else, such as a carer or a friend.
- **Knock and wait service** – Allows additional time for customers to answer the door, or telephone, when we contact them.
- **Additional support during home visits** – Our Vulnerability Liaison Officers can join our colleagues whenever extra support is needed.
- **Recite me tool on our website** – We know that some people may find it difficult to read websites for several different reasons. We use the Recite me tool to make our site as accessible as possible.
- **Password scheme** – Customers can join our password scheme, choosing their own memorable password. This password will only be given to colleagues who need to visit their home so customers can be confident that a Southern Water employee is at their door.
- **Advance notice of planned works** – Our priority services customers will receive advance notice of any pre-planned work within their area. Dependent on the recorded type of support needed, we'll let them know what's happening and arrange delivery of bottled water if we need to turn off their supply. We may do this by text, letter, email or a telephone call. If a customer has made us aware of a critical need for water, such as home dialysis, we'll make this a priority.
- **Water efficiency visits** – Our customer teams and dedicated Here to Help team can arrange water efficiency visits for the customers that are eligible.



When we start a large project, such as our digital metering roll out, our priority customers are a key consideration at every stage of development. We adapt our information, providing additional time and clear information to help with any concerns. Where relevant, we'll make appointments with those that have critical needs, as well as creating clear processes so those with temporary vulnerabilities are not overlooked. Our colleagues on the ground, are trained in identifying vulnerabilities and are equipped with the necessary information to signpost and refer these customers for additional support.

When responding to customer concerns, such as leaks or flooding, our teams will prioritise customers on our PSR, allowing us to allocate resources and provide assistance more quickly.

To make sure customers who need extra support are consistently considered across the business, we've created personas that help us to develop our services. These will become part of our training package for all employees.

## Chronic or serious illness



For customers with chronic or serious illnesses our services are designed to improve comfort, safety, and peace of mind. These services include:

- A knock-and-wait service, allowing extra time to answer the door.
- Text alerts during supply outages to support planning and reduce disruption.
- Advance notice of planned work to help prepare for any interruptions.
- The option to nominate a trusted third party to communicate on the customer's behalf.
- Bottled water deliveries during supply outages or emergencies.
- Access to a dedicated 'Here to Help' phone line for prompt, compassionate assistance.
- The ability to request an additional presence during home visits for added reassurance.
- Password facilities, allowing customers to set a secure password for home visits or phone contact, helping to confirm the identity of staff and provide added security and confidence for family and carers.

## Dementia



Customers living with dementia can access a range of tailored support services designed to provide reassurance, improve communication, and ensure their needs are met with care and understanding. These include:

- A knock-and-wait service, allowing extra time to answer the door.
- Text alerts during supply outages to support planning and reduce disruption.
- Advance notice of planned work to help prepare for any interruptions.
- The option to nominate a trusted third party to communicate on the customer's behalf.
- Bottled water deliveries during supply outages or emergencies.
- Access to a dedicated 'Here to Help' phone line for prompt, compassionate assistance.
- The ability to request an additional presence during home visits for added reassurance.
- Password facilities, allowing customers to set a secure password for home visits or phone contact, helping to confirm the identity of staff and provide added security and confidence for family and carers.





## Blind or partially sighted

Customers who are blind, partially sighted or visually impaired can access a range of accessible services to support independence, improve communication, and make sure essential information is available in a format that works for them. These include:

- A knock-and-wait service, giving extra time to answer the door safely and comfortably.
- Alternative communication formats, including Braille, large print, and upcoming access to a Video Relay Service, ensuring important information is accessible.
- Text alerts during supply outages, helping customers or their support networks plan ahead.
- Advance notice of planned outages, reducing unexpected disruptions and allowing time to prepare.
- The option to nominate a trusted third party to act or communicate on the customer's behalf.
- Bottled water deliveries during supply outages or emergencies, ensuring continued access to safe drinking water.
- Access to a dedicated 'Here to Help' phone line, offering direct support from a trained team.
- The ability to request an additional presence during home visits, providing reassurance and assistance if needed.
- In-person visits, where staff are trained to communicate clearly and respectfully, ensuring that customers receive the support they need in a way that works best for them.
- Signposting to other services and support, both within and outside the company, to connect customers with further help.
- Use of the Recite Me accessibility tool on the website, offering screen reading, text magnification, and other features to improve online access.



## Restricted movement

Our customers with restricted movement can benefit from a range of services designed to reduce physical strain, and ensure essential needs are met with ease. These include:

- A knock-and-wait service, allowing extra time to reach the door safely.
- Text communication during supply outages, helping customers or their carers plan ahead and avoid unnecessary movement.
- Advance notice of planned incidents, allowing time to make any necessary arrangements in advance.
- The option to nominate a trusted third party to act or communicate on the customer's behalf, reducing the need for direct interaction.
- Bottled water deliveries during supply outages or emergencies, ensuring continued access to drinking water without the need to leave home.
- Access to a dedicated 'Here to Help' phone line, offering quick and compassionate support.
- The ability to request an additional presence during home visits, providing reassurance and physical assistance if needed.
- Signposting to other services and support, both within and outside the company, to connect customers with further help and resources.
- Use of the Recite Me accessibility tool on the website, offering features like screen reading and text customization to support easier online access.



## Mental health

Customers living with mental health conditions are able to access a range of services designed to reduce anxiety, improve communication, and make sure help is available when it's needed most. These include:

- A knock-and-wait service, offering extra time to answer the door in a calm and unpressured way.
- Text communication during supply outages, helping customers or their support networks plan ahead and avoid unexpected stress.
- Advance notice of planned incidents, reducing uncertainty and allowing time to prepare.
- The option to nominate a trusted third party to act or communicate on the customer's behalf, offering peace of mind and support.
- Bottled water deliveries during supply outages or emergencies, ensuring essential needs are met without added worry.
- Access to a dedicated 'Here to Help' phone line, providing direct, compassionate assistance from a trained team.
- The ability to request an additional presence during home visits, providing reassurance and support.
- Signposting to other services and support, both within and outside the company, to help connect customers with further mental health resources.
- Use of the Recite Me accessibility tool on the website, offering features like screen reading and text customization to support easier, more comfortable online access.
- Mental Health First Aiders are also available within the company to support colleagues, ensuring staff are equipped to respond with empathy and understanding when assisting customers with mental health needs.

## Not being able to communicate in English

To support customers who are unable to communicate in English we provide a range of inclusive services designed to make communication clear, provide equal access to information, and the ability to receive support in a way that works best for them. These include:

- Use of the Recite Me accessibility tool on the website, which offers translation into multiple languages and other helpful features to improve online access.
- The option to nominate a trusted third party to act or communicate on the customer's behalf, ensuring their needs are clearly understood and met.
- Literature available in multiple alternative languages, making important information easier to understand and act on.
- Multiple contact options, including phone, email, and online forms, allowing customers to choose the method that suits them best.
- Access to a dedicated 'Here to Help' phone line, where trained staff can offer guidance and support.
- Advance notice of planned incidents, helping customers prepare for any service changes or interruptions.
- Text communication during supply outages, enabling customers or their representatives to plan ahead and stay informed.
- The ability to request an additional presence during home visits, providing reassurance and support during interactions.





## Developmental conditions

Customers with developmental conditions can access a range of services to help reduce anxiety, improve understanding, and ensure a calm and accessible experience. These include:

- A knock-and-wait service, giving extra time to answer the door and reducing the stress of unexpected visits.
- Text communication during supply outages, helping customers or their carers plan ahead and avoid confusion or disruption.
- Advance notice of planned incidents, allowing time to prepare and reducing the impact of unexpected changes.
- The option to nominate a trusted third party to act or communicate on the customer's behalf, ensuring their needs are clearly understood and supported.
- Bottled water deliveries during supply outages or emergencies, ensuring essential needs are met without added worry.
- Access to a dedicated 'Here to Help' phone line, offering direct, compassionate support from trained staff.
- The ability to request an additional presence during home visits, providing reassurance and support during interactions.
- Signposting to other services and support, both within and outside the company, to help connect customers and their families with further assistance and resources.
- Password facilities, allowing customers to set a secure password for home visits or phone contact, helping to confirm the identity of staff and provide added security and confidence.



## Pensionable age

Customers of pensionable age can access a wide range of services designed to make communication easier, reduce worry during supply interruptions, and ensure help is always available when needed. These include:

- A knock-and-wait service, giving extra time to answer the door safely and without pressure.
- Text communication during supply outages, helping customers or their carers plan ahead and stay informed.
- Advance notice of planned incidents, allowing time to prepare and avoid unexpected disruptions.
- The option to nominate a trusted third party to act or communicate on the customer's behalf, ensuring their needs are clearly represented.
- Bottled water deliveries during supply outages or emergencies, ensuring continued access to drinking water without the need to leave home.
- Access to a dedicated 'Here to Help' phone line, offering direct support from a team trained to assist with care and understanding.
- The ability to request an additional presence during home visits, providing reassurance and support during interactions.
- Signposting to other services and support, both within and outside the company, to help connect customers with further assistance and resources.
- Use of the Recite Me accessibility tool on the website, offering features like text-to-speech, translation, and text customization to support easier online access.
- Help with reading the meter, ensuring customers can manage their usage and billing without difficulty.

## Hearing and speech difficulties

Customers who are blind or visually impaired can access a range of services to ensure clear communication, safe interactions, and accessible support at every stage. These include:

- A knock-and-wait service, giving extra time to answer the door and ensuring staff are patient and respectful during visits.
- Text communication during supply outages, helping carers or support networks stay informed and plan ahead.
- Advance notice of planned incidents, in their preferred method, allowing time to prepare and avoid unexpected disruptions.
- The option to nominate a trusted third party to act or communicate on the customer's behalf, ensuring their needs are clearly understood and supported.
- Bottled water deliveries during supply outages or emergencies, ensuring continued access to drinking water without the need to leave home.
- Access to a dedicated 'Here to Help' phone line, offering direct, compassionate support from trained staff.
- The ability to request an additional presence during home visits, providing reassurance and assistance during interactions.
- Signposting to other services and support, both within and outside the company, to help connect customers with further assistance and resources.
- Use of the Recite Me accessibility tool on the website, offering screen reading, text magnification, and translation features to support easier online access.
- Help with reading the meter, ensuring customers can manage their usage and billing without difficulty.
- In-person access, allowing customers to receive support face-to-face when needed, with staff trained to communicate clearly and respectfully.
- Introduction of a Video Relay Service, enabling customers who use British Sign Language (BSL) or other visual communication methods to interact with staff through a qualified interpreter, improving accessibility and understanding.



## Families with children under five years old

Households with children or young families can access a range of supportive services designed to reduce stress, improve communication, and help manage daily routines during service interruptions. These include:

- A knock-and-wait service, giving parents extra time to answer the door safely, especially when caring for young children.
- Text communication during supply outages, helping families plan ahead and avoid unexpected disruption to routines like mealtimes or bathing.
- Advance notice of planned incidents, allowing time to prepare and make alternative arrangements if needed.
- The option to nominate a trusted third party to act or communicate on the household's behalf, ensuring support is always available.
- Bottled water deliveries during supply outages or emergencies, ensuring families have access to safe drinking water for children and infants.

- Access to a dedicated 'Here to Help' phone line, offering quick and compassionate support from trained staff.
- The ability to request an additional presence during home visits, providing reassurance and support during interactions.
- Signposting to other services and support, both within and outside the company, to help connect families with further assistance and resources.
- Help with reading the meter, ensuring families can manage their usage and billing without added stress.
- In-person access, allowing families to speak directly with staff when needed, with support tailored to their specific household needs.







## Temporary life changes

We provide a range of flexible services for customers going through temporary life changes to help reduce stress, maintain comfort, and ensure essential needs are met during times of adjustment. These include:

- A knock-and-wait service, giving extra time to answer the door safely and without pressure.
- Text communication during supply outages, helping customers or their support networks plan ahead and avoid unexpected disruption.
- Advance notice of planned incidents, allowing time to prepare and make necessary arrangements.
- The option to nominate a trusted third party to act or communicate on the customer's behalf, ensuring support is available even when direct communication is difficult.
- Bottled water deliveries during supply outages or emergencies, ensuring continued access to drinking water without the need to leave home.
- Access to a dedicated 'Here to Help' phone line, offering quick and compassionate support from trained staff.
- The ability to request an additional presence during home visits, providing reassurance and assistance during interactions.
- Signposting to other services and support, both within and outside the company, to help connect customers with further help and resources.
- Help with reading the meter, ensuring customers can manage their usage and billing without added stress.
- In-person access, allowing customers to receive face-to-face support when needed, tailored to their temporary circumstances.
- A password scheme, offering added security and peace of mind by allowing customers to verify the identity of staff during visits or calls.

## Poor sense of taste or smell

Customers with a reduced sense of smell or taste can have access to a range of supportive services designed to enhance safety, improve communication, and ensure timely awareness of any service issues. These include:

- Text communication during supply outages, helping customers or their support networks stay informed and take action promptly—especially important when sensory cues like unusual smells or tastes may go unnoticed.
- Advance notice of planned incidents, allowing time to prepare and avoid unexpected disruptions that could affect routines or safety.
- The option to nominate a trusted third party to act or communicate on the customer's behalf, ensuring their needs are clearly understood and supported.
- Bottled water deliveries during supply outages or emergencies, ensuring continued access to safe drinking water, especially when changes in water quality might not be detected through taste or smell.
- A knock-and-wait service, giving extra time to answer the door and ensuring staff are patient and respectful during visits.
- Access to a dedicated 'Here to Help' phone line, offering direct, compassionate support from trained staff.
- The ability to request an additional presence during home visits, providing reassurance and assistance during interactions.
- Signposting to other services and support, both within and outside the company, to help connect customers with further assistance and resources.
- Help with reading the meter, ensuring accurate billing and usage tracking without relying on sensory cues.



## Water dependency

Customers who are water-dependent or undergoing home dialysis can access a highly responsive and tailored services to ensure their health and treatment are never compromised. These include:

- A knock-and-wait service, giving extra time to answer the door safely, especially during treatment or rest periods.
- Text communication during supply outages, enabling patients or their carers to plan ahead and take necessary precautions.
- Advance notice of planned incidents, allowing time to prepare and avoid any disruption to essential medical routines.
- The option to nominate a trusted third party to act or communicate on the customer's behalf, ensuring support is always available.
- Bottled water deliveries during supply outages or emergencies, ensuring continuous access to clean water for hydration and medical use.
- Access to a dedicated 'Here to Help' phone line, offering direct, compassionate support from trained staff who understand the urgency of water-dependent needs.
- The ability to request an additional presence during home visits, providing reassurance and assistance during interactions.
- Signposting to other services and support, both within and outside the company, to help connect customers with further medical or community resources.
- Help with reading the meter, ensuring accurate billing and usage tracking without added stress.
- In-person access, allowing customers to speak directly with staff when needed, with support tailored to their medical circumstances.
- A password scheme, offering added security and peace of mind by allowing customers to verify the identity of staff during visits or calls.
- For home dialysis patients, a tailored response process and in-person contact during supply outages, ensuring urgent needs are prioritised and managed with care and speed.



Priority support in an incident

We understand that a loss of water supply or flooding is challenging for our all our customers, but especially for those that have additional needs. Our business plan 2025–30 will see us upgrade our infrastructure and improve our services so we can continue to provide an efficient and resilient service to all our customers. However, we can’t rule out incidents happening in the future, and we want to make sure we have the right level of support in place.

When there is a risk of loss to a water supply, we have a process in place to quickly identify the scale of the issue and the level of support required. We operate a four-tier process dependent on the type of incident and the number of properties impacted.

Incident Tier	Repsonse	Description
Level 1	Monitored	Monitored by our operational Control Centre
Level 2	Controlled	Our Incident Manager will oversee the dedicated incident response team
Level 3	Serious	A serious incident with a dedicated response team lead by our Operational Control Manaagement team
Level 4	Critical	A critical incident with a dedicated response team lead by our Executive Major Incident team

Communication when it’s needed

Our teams work quickly to make as much information as possible available across multiple platforms.

When things go wrong our customers have told us their preferred channel of communication is text message. “SMS as primary means of direct comms is the right choice for customers and proves valuable at imparting key information”. Customer following an incident.

Our customer team will send key information, including details of the issue, it’s impact and a link to our website. We’ll then continue to send out updates throughout a water supply outage to make sure customers are kept as informed as possible.

As part of our commitment to improve our incident process, we’re introducing new communication channels, including direct emails and tailored priority messages. We’re also working with partners in the community to help reach customers who may not have access to our online channels or receive text messages.

Figure 7: Example of Loss of Supply Communications

Urgent mains repair work in GU31 5JH means you might lose pressure or water supply for a short time today. We are sorry for the inconvenience this will cause. We will be working as quickly as possible to get things back to normal. Further updates will be on our website <https://www.southernwater.co.uk/help-advice/works-or-issues-in-my-area> When supply does return, bubbles and some temporary discolouration are normal.

During an incident:

- Our operational team keeps our interactive incident map updated to let customers know there is a problem and how they can find out more information.
- Our Communications team keeps the website, and social media channels (Facebook and X) updated with key information. While our Customer Contact Centre team is on hand to respond to any emails, webchat or social media contact.
- Our Stakeholder team reaches out to local councillors, Members of Parliament and local resilience teams to make sure communities are kept updated and our information reaches as many people as possible.

For larger incidents a dedicated page is set up on our website to provide as much information as possible. This page will include detailed information, including photos and videos to help explain the nature of the issue and our progress, as well as details of our alternative water sites and their opening hours. Customers can also find clear information on how to contact us and join our Priority Services Register.

Transient and emerging vulnerabilities

While we continue to work hard to raise awareness and increase the reach of our Priority Services Register and its services, we know that some people may not be aware of the services available or know that they need additional support until a water supply outage occurs.

During an incident we will work closely with local resilience forum’s, a multi-agency group made up of emergency responders and other utility providers, to identify any additional vulnerabilities we may not have recorded. The sharing of this data is strictly for use in emergency situations only and is provided on a temporary basis.

Additionally, our customers can join our register through our contact centre, our dedicated Here To Help team and our colleagues and partners working in their communities during an outage. For those that are eligible for bottled water delivery, our teams will gather and direct information from those with emerging needs to our emergency planning team and arrange for water delivery where needed.

Alternative water supplies

Providing customers with an alternative supply of water during an incident is our priority. We set up strategic locations across any area impacted where customers can access bottled water for everyone in their household, including their pets.

We understand that not everyone can access these water stations, which is why we also deliver water to those on our PSR. During an incident our customer team is focused on identifying everyone who may need additional support.

*We are currently experiencing issues at Beauport Water Supply Works, our teams are on site investigating the issue. As a precaution we'll be starting to deliver bottled water to our most vulnerable customers on our Priority Services Register and we're working to get bottled water stations open. Please check our website and social media for updates. We're sorry for the inconvenience this will cause.*

Figure 8: Example of Loss of Supply Communications to vulnerable customers

Depending on the issue we may take precautionary measures for our priority customers and deliver alternative water prior to the supply being lost.

We deliver bottled water to all our priority customers during an incident, but for larger incidents or when taking precautionary measures, we may prioritise certain needs over others and our deliveries may focus on those with critical requirements.

During these incidents we'll using the following system to prioritise customers on our PSR (below).

As part of our strategy, we've committed to reviewing the way we deliver bottled water during supply interruptions, alongside carrying out a review of how we keep priority customers informed. We want to make sure we can deliver alternative water quickly and reliably and that customers know what to expect.

We'll clearly communicate how our priority system works so customers know what to expect from us. This will include providing delivery timeframes. Work is already underway to introduce a tracker with our delivery partners, which will allow us to clearly see when a customer has received a delivery. We're also reviewing how we close our incidents, and the support offered to customers once their water supply is switched back on. We're working closely with our stakeholders, partners and CCW to make sure our review achieves the best outcome for our customers.

Tier	Description
1	Our most vulnerable customers, who require water for medical conditions or cannot leave the property
2	Customers who may require additional support form us such as help reading their meter or have young children in the property
3	Customers who may be less likely to be impacted by an incident such as those with alternative communication needs or perhaps experiencing temporary life changes such as redundancy



## Wider support during an incident

Our region is home to over 5,000 hospitals, schools and care homes. Our detailed incident response includes making sure the critical need for water is maintained for institutions looking after the most vulnerable in our communities. We have six of our own clean water tankers and a further four available to us through our partners. Our tankers are used to keep hospitals and schools in supply throughout an incident and can provide a constant delivery of water.

In 2023 we launched our partnership with leading Kidney Care charity Kidney Care UK, helping us establish a tailored process for our home dialysis patients. We're now able to reach out directly to customers who are registered to discuss their medical requirements, allowing us to understand what support they need from us to be able to continue with their critical treatment and maintain their water supply. We also work closely with Kidney Care UK during an incident sharing social media posts to help raise awareness of the issue and its impact.

We will continue to improve our response when issues arise and are committed to learning from our mistakes when things go wrong. We track overall satisfaction following major incidents to understand how the incident was handled, looking at areas such as information provided during the outage, recall and usefulness of communication and awareness of alternative water supplies. This insight helps us continuously improve how we support customers.

Overall customer satisfaction currently measures at 5.7% and we're committed to increasing this to 7% by 2030. We aim to share the outcome of critical incidents with our customers in a clear and transparent way, including providing a summary report.



“It would have been better to have had a little bit more sense of progress, rather than messages that seemed to be just them checking in with us,”

“I think the water delivery to priority customers could of been better,”



“I think that Southern Water could have had more water pick up points as the queues were very long and not worth waiting in,”

## Hardship fund

Our £250,000 Hardship Fund provides customers experiencing additional financial hardship with an opportunity to apply for a debt write off up to £2,000. They can also access essential home appliances or furniture that may otherwise have been unaffordable.

We understand that going without everyday essential items, such as a washing machine, can lead to extra expenses, such as launderette fees and travel costs, as well as impacting the physical wellbeing of those unable to clean their clothes.

By offering support through our Hardship Fund, we hope to help improve financial stability and the overall wellbeing of our customers.

Since the fund was launched in April 2021, we've supported over 1,200 customers through either debt write off, grants or food vouchers. During 2024–25 we supported over 140 customers experiencing significant financial hardship by offering a debt write-off up to £2,000. We also provided essential white goods or specific items of furniture to over 150 customers, including £2,000 of food vouchers.

- ✓ 65 Washing machines
- ✓ 40 Fridge freezers
- ✓ 43 Cookers
- ✓ 3 other essential items.

"I just want to write a quick note to say thank you for the support regarding the replacement washing machine, I would have had to go without for some time, as I currently don't have any spare funds. The grant was a massive help as times are tough at present with the increase in cost of living. So once again, thank you for your generosity it is greatly appreciated".

## Giving back to the community

By accumulating reward points when buying white goods through our Hardship Fund, we can redeem these against food items, which we donate to local community hubs, providing welcome support within the community we live and work in.

We recognise the cost of living continues to impact our customers and we want to do more to help. As part of our strategy, we plan to increase the value of our Hardship Fund from £250,000 each year to £1,250,000. More details of our plans and what this looks like can be found on page 6.

Applications to our Hardship fund can be made through our website, via one of our colleagues, either on the telephone or in the community, or through referrals from one of our many stakeholders or partners.



# Where our strategy will take us

1

Engaging



## Digital metering

Our plan to replace expired meters with those that have smart capabilities, will allow customers to access more accurate, regular, and easily accessible meter readings in the future.



### Audience



Physical vulnerability



Non-physical vulnerability



Transactional vulnerability



Financial vulnerability



### Approach



Over the next five years we'll be rolling out upgraded meters to all customers. They will allow customers to see how much water they're using.



The meters will be rolled out in small areas, installed by our partners, to reduce impact process carefully.



We'll be communicating with our customers regularly throughout the roll out, including dedicated updates for our PSR customers, with our website acting as a hub for any questions, concerns and support.



Priority customers with a critical dependency on water will be provided with appointments for the roll out. Engineers and contact centre agents will be trained in recognising customers that need extra help during the project and a dedicated process to allow for temporary vulnerabilities will be created.



**Long term**  
one to five years



### Benefits

By replacing our meters, customers will be able to check how much water they're using, giving them an accurate view of the cost of their water. This will reduce unexpected costs and allow them to plan and budget. Improved visibility of how much water is being used by customers will also allow us to spot any unusual flow patterns and spot leaks and issues on our network more quickly.



### Key Metrics



We'll measure the success of the roll out through regular customer surveys. Implementing any 'lessons learnt' improvements along the way.



We'll monitor our customer satisfaction score for improved customer experience and outcomes related to the project.



We will introduce further measures as the project starts and we are able to integrate the information provided by the new meters into a planned new CRM.

1

Engaging



## Improved community visibility

Through our Your Water Matters drop-in events, increasing awareness of our business plans and vulnerability support.



### Audience



Physical vulnerability



Non-physical vulnerability



Transactional vulnerability



Financial vulnerability



### Approach



We'll continue to improve visibility in our communities, using customer insight to understand where support is needed so we can plan future events.



We'll continue to talk to stakeholders, customers and local authorities, sharing information and our calendar of events.



We'll monitor and review communication campaigns to make sure as many people as possible are aware of the event. We also commit to making sure the events are scheduled at convenient times so no one misses out on an opportunity to attend.



### Ongoing



### Benefits

By being more visible in our communities and letting customers know more about our plans, we can increase awareness of our services, talk to our customers directly and offer face-to-face support. It also means we can keep customers informed about our performance and any impact from our operations on them and their community.



### Key Metrics



To make sure that our actions are having an impact, we're aiming to increase the number of customers who feel we support their needs from 66% to 80% by 2030.



To track the success of our targeted campaigns and outreach work we want to increase the number of customers that are aware of the services available to them from 57% to 75% by 2030.



We'll measure satisfaction of customers attending the events to make sure they stay relevant.





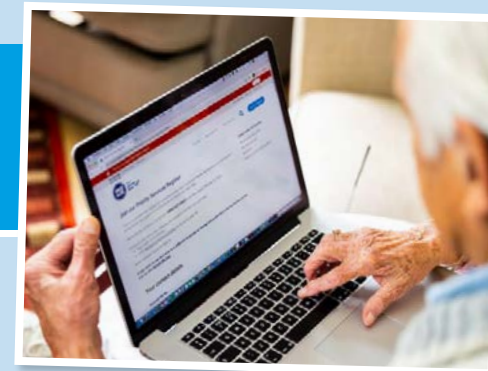
1

Engaging



## Improved online functionality

We plan to improve our customer journey by enabling more of our services to be equally accessible through all platforms including written, verbally and online, as well as more communication methods including British Sign Language interpretation.



### Audience



Physical vulnerability



Non-physical vulnerability



Transactional vulnerability



Financial vulnerability



### Approach



We'll create an online platform to allow eligible customers to renew their social tariff registration, offer them more options to contact us and create a more inclusive service.



Along with our new tool we'll review the way we communicate our renewal process, including using clear language free from jargon and looking at improving our offering of correspondence issued in alternative formats.



Work is underway to introduce an online Video Relay Service to improve the accessibility of our services and enable customers to communicate in British Sign Language.



We'll introduce more account management features into our 'Your Account' portal, including notifications for the social tariff annual renewal declaration and the ability to register for, and review the services provided on the Priority Services Register.



We'll review our current processes to identify online improvements in the customer journey to increase the options available to customers.



**Medium term**  
two to three years



### Benefits

By improving online functionality we can deliver a more inclusive service, creating more options for people to quickly update us at any time. This is important for those who face barriers with in-person contact or manual processes. Improving online processes will also reduce the contact into our contact centre meaning more customers can reach us easily when needed.



### Key Metrics



To make sure our actions are having an impact we'll increase the number of customers who feel we support their needs well from 66% to 80% by 2030.



We'll measure online activity in line with current processes to determine the success of any new features.



We'll look to measure the impact of our plans by increasing the satisfaction score of our Priority Services Customers from 68% to 90% by 2030.



By extending assistance through our social tariff, we plan to support an additional 24,000 customers by 2030, increasing the number of customers supported to 182,000.



## Partnerships

We'll continue to maintain, strengthen and expand on our current partnerships. These relationships improve our ability to identify, reach and support vulnerable customers through shared expertise and resource.



### Audience



Physical vulnerability



Non-physical vulnerability



Transactional vulnerability



Financial vulnerability



### Approach



We'll continue to identify potential partnerships that align with our vision and Ofwat's Service for All guidelines. Collaborating with other utility providers for alignment.



We'll introduce a dedicated Partnership Management role to establish and maintain partnerships that align with our objective to support customers who may need extra help in accessing their water and wastewater services.



We'll utilise our stakeholder and partnership relationships to support our targeted campaigns and help reach eligible customers identified by our data and insight.



We'll maintain strong relationships with our existing partners, making use of their expertise and resource to provide the best service for our customers.



### Ongoing



### Benefits

By continuing to work closely and collaboratively with key partners we can make sure our services are relevant and accessible for all our customers. By actively identifying new partnerships that align with our vision we can collaborate with the best organisations to deliver the right outcomes for customers and colleagues.



### Key Metrics



We'll assess the effectiveness of our partnerships against agreed metrics.



To measure the impact of any internal training, process and service enhancements, we'll aim to increase the % of colleagues who feel they can support customers effectively by 2030.



We'll look to measure the impact of our plans by increasing the satisfaction score of our Priority Services Customers from 68% to 90% by 2030.



We'll review our partnerships to assess process improvements and training insight gained, using customer satisfaction scores and staff engagement surveys as our measure to track the success of our targeted campaigns and outreach work we'll look to increase the percentage of customers aware of the services available to them from 57% to 75% by 2030.



By extending assistance through our social tariff, we plan to support an additional 24,000 customers with our Essential tariff by 2030, increasing the number of customers supported to 182,000.



## Auto enrolment for our support tariffs

Our targeted outreach campaigns for our social tariff focus on securing data agreements with local authorities across all regions, allowing us to efficiently enrol those that meet the eligibility criteria, extending our reach to those that need support.



### Audience



Physical  
vulnerability



Transactional  
vulnerability



### Approach



We'll continue to work with local authorities to secure further data agreements for residents, expanding on the success of existing partnerships to promote further engagement.



We'll review eligibility criteria for all support tariffs to identify any auto enrolment opportunities and increase the amount of support offered to our customers.



We'll build on the success of our auto enrolment campaign, using media and digital platforms, as well as stakeholder partnerships, to improve awareness of our complete support package, including services provided to our priority service customers.



### Long term ongoing



### Benefits

By increasing our auto enrolment functions, we can make sure our services are inclusive and accessible to everyone the needs them, as well as building on engagement to help increase awareness for our wide range of support services.



### Key Metrics



We'll track the number of customers supported on our social tariff to meet our target of 182,000 by 2030.



Priority Service Register services

To make sure the additional support for those on our Priority Service Register are easily known and relevant to everyone, we'll look at better ways to record the extra services needed.



Audience



Non-physical vulnerability



Transactional vulnerability



Financial vulnerability



Approach



Our agents can easily identify our priority customers with a front-page flag when accessing their account, allowing them to review the reason for being on the Priority Services Register and the services needed. As part of our plans to introduce new Client Relationship Management (CRM) technology we will look to make this much quicker and easier for our colleagues, bringing all information into one place, as well as linking this into our 'Your Account' portal.



We want people to be aware of the services available and what this looks like for them. We'll improve our registration communication to include confirmation of why a customer is registered on the PSR and what this means for them. This means customers will know what services they will receive from us and when.



Work is underway to introduce an online Video Relay Service to improve the accessibility of our services and enable customers to communicate in British Sign Language.



We'll give customers the ability to register and review Priority Register Services in our 'Your Account ' portal so they can understand what service they will receive from us.



We're looking to use our Agent Assist AI tool to deliver this information quickly and effectively for our agents.



Short medium long term one to five years



Benefits

By introducing a more efficient way of delivering information to our colleagues and customers, we can make sure that each interaction is meaningful informative and helps us tailor service quickly when needed.



Key Metrics



We'll look to measure the impact of our plans by increasing the satisfaction score of our priority customers from 68% to 90% by 2030.



To make sure our actions are having an impact we'll aim to increase the percentage of customers who feel Southern Water supports their needs well from 66% to 80% by 2030.



To track the success of our targeted campaigns and outreach work we'll look to increase the percentage of customers aware of the services available to them from 57% to 75% by 2030.



By increasing awareness and improving communication, we'll expand the reach of our Priority Services Register increasing from 16% to 26 % by 2030.



CCW Vulnerability Matrix Assessment – TBC



GSS Payments for Priority Services not received – TBC



3

Tailored Service



## Income maximisation

To introduce an online benefits maximisation tool as part of our financial assistance application process.



### Audience



Non-physical  
vulnerability



Transactional  
vulnerability



### Approach



We're teaming up with Policy in Practice, a benefits maximisation provider, to help us build a new online tool which will allow our customers to make the most of their benefits while completing our support tariff application form.



Our new partnership will streamline our current online tariff application process for customers, making sure that the journey is inclusive and the support available is clear and easy to understand.



Our new partnership will allow users of other Policy in Practice calculators to easily link into the support we have to offer.



**Short term**  
one year



### Benefits

By supporting the financial wellbeing of our customers, we can help deliver money-saving opportunities to help our customers be in the best financial position possible.



### Key Metrics

- ✓ We'll track the number of customers using our online financial assistance form.
- ✓ We'll track the number of customers supported on our social tariff to meet our target of 182,000 by 2030.
- ✓ To make sure our actions are having an impact we'll aim to increase the percentage of customers who feel Southern Water supports their needs well from 66% to 80% by 2030.

3

Tailored Service



## Review of current tariffs

We commit to regularly reviewing our tariffs to make sure they remain relevant and meet customer's needs.



### Audience



Transactional  
vulnerability



Financial  
vulnerability



### Approach



We'll work together with other water providers and regulatory bodies to explore the proposed plans and benefits in implementing a single social tariff, making sure the customer is at the heart of any outcome.



We'll review the eligibility criteria for our social tariff annually to make sure it remains fit for purpose and provides fair and consistent support for those that need it.



We'll engage with stakeholders, partners and customer insight to review our overall offering of support tariffs, making sure that the level of support remains relevant, and we respond to feedback.



**Long term**  
two to three years



### Benefits

By regularly reviewing the support tariffs we offer we can make sure that customers receive relevant and meaningful support when they need it.



### Key Metrics



To make sure our actions are having an impact we'll aim to increase the percentage of customers who feel Southern Water supports their needs well from 66% to 80% by 2030.

4

Support when you need it most



## Incident process review

We'll undertake detailed analysis of our customers' requirements and feedback during major incidents and perform gap analysis to identify improvements.



### Audience



Physical vulnerability



Non-physical vulnerability



Transactional vulnerability



### Approach



We'll be looking at our tiered approach to delivering bottled water. Our customers have told us that bottled water deliveries during an incident are an issue. As our Priority Services Register grows, we want to make sure we are prioritising those with critical needs within the required timeframes.



We're putting in place a delivery tracking tool to allow us to clearly see the status of our bottled water deliveries. This will allow agents to easily provide updates to customers and reduce repeat requests.



During an incident we may receive additional priority services data from many different sources, for example local authorities, and delivery requirements can change on an hourly basis. We want to make sure we can effectively absorb additional requests into a live situation and plans to design and implement a data solution tool are underway.



As part of our review of our tiered approach to bottled water deliveries, we'll introduce dedicated timeframes and make sure this is reflected in our communication to our priority customers, as well as our incident communication. We want our customers to know what to expect and when.



**Medium term**  
one to two years



### Benefits

Supporting vulnerable customers during an incident is key to our strategy. By improving on existing processes we can provide a consistent reliable service, eliminate delays and make sure the right support is provided when it's needed most.



### Key Metrics

- ✓ To make sure our actions are having an impact we'll aim to increase the percentage of customers who feel Southern Water supports their needs well from 66% to 80% by 2030.
- ✓ We'll look to measure the impact of our plans by increasing the satisfaction score of our priority customers from 68% to 90% by 2030.
- ✓ We'll look to measure the impact of our plans by increasing the satisfaction score of our Priority Services Customers from 68% to 90% by 2030.
- ✓ GSS Payments for priority services not received - **TBC**
- ✓ We aim to measure our progress with communication and services during major incidents by improving the average score rated by customers for incident management from 5.7 to 7.

4

Support when you need it most



## Incident communication review

We'll undertake detailed analysis of our customers' requirements and feedback during and after critical incidents and perform gap analysis to identify improvements.



### Audience



Physical  
vulnerability



Non-physical  
vulnerability



Transactional  
vulnerability



### Approach



We'll look at the method of communication during an incident. Our customers have told us text message is the preferred communication channel. However, by adopting multiple methods of communication such as text and email we can make sure that we achieve a greater reach and provide more detailed information.



We'll review the content of our communication during an incident. Feedback has highlighted that receiving regular updates was proactive, but the information needed to provide more progress updates and timeframes.



Targeted communication to priority customers – we'll be making sure our most vulnerable customers receive communication relevant to them. We'll look to let customers know they are a priority, and they'll be receiving bottled water, with timeframes for delivery.



We commit to reviewing our courier delivery service so our agents can provide accurate information on the status of bottled water deliveries for vulnerable customers.



**Medium term**  
**one to two years**



### Benefits

By regularly reviewing the type and method of communication, we can ensure customers receive more useful and relevant updates, allowing those impacted to plan appropriately during an incident. This will make sure our contact platforms are not overwhelmed and those that need urgent support can receive it quickly.



### Key Metrics

- ✓ To make sure our actions are having an impact we'll aim to increase the percentage of customers who feel Southern Water supports their needs well from 66% to 80% by 2030.
- ✓ CCW Vulnerability Matrix Assessment – TBC
- ✓ We aim to measure our progress with communication and services during major incidents by improving the average score rated by customers for incident management from 5.7 to 7.
- ✓ We'll look to measure the impact of our plans by increasing the satisfaction score of our Priority Services Customers from 68% to 90% by 2030.
- ✓ GSS Payments for priority services not received - TBC



4

Support when you need it most



## Increased hardship support

We want to increase the number of customers supported through our Hardship Fund, as this targets those most in need. We'll increase the Hardship Fund from £250,000 to £1.25 million per year.



### Audience



Physical vulnerability



Non-physical vulnerability



Transactional vulnerability



Financial vulnerability



### Approach



We'll look at the current level of debt write off offered under the scheme. Currently at £2,000, we'll review the level of support to provide more customers with a full debt write off and offer the chance of a fresh start.



We want to improve the offering of everyday items that will have a significant impact on our customers financial and physical wellbeing. We'll work with stakeholders, CCW and use customer insight to create an improved portfolio of everyday items to support customers wellbeing.



The introduction of a dedicated Hardship Fund Manager will allow us to raise awareness of the fund and make sure stakeholder and customer engagement is maintained, and our portfolio of support remains relevant.



**Short – long term  
one to five years**



### Benefits

By enhancing the support we offer to our customers, we can provide better outcomes, help create financial stability and improve long term benefits, as well as impacting quality of life.



### Key Metrics



We'll track customer outcomes to assess for indication of improved ability to maintain financial commitments.



To make sure our services remain as inclusive as possible, we'll continue to maintain our BSI consumer vulnerability inclusive services certificate each year.



Increase the number of customers we can support through the scheme.

4

Support when you need it most



## Priority Service Register – communication

To help increase awareness of the assistance available for our Priority Services Register customers, we'll review our current communication and outreach campaigns, and perform detailed gap analysis to identify improvements.



### Audience



Non-physical  
vulnerability



Financial  
vulnerability



### Approach



We want people to be aware of the services available and what this looks like for them. We'll improve our registration communication to include confirmation of why a customer is registered on the PSR and what this means for them. This means customers will know what services they will receive from us and when.



To raise awareness of our services and identify those eligible for support we'll use our local demographic data to perform gap analysis and design targeted campaigns that match the needs of the community. We'll also use this data to find the best ways to reach different groups and raise awareness of our services.



We plan to work together with our partners and stakeholders to design joint awareness campaigns that maximise our reach and share a unified message across all organisations. We'll also dedicate specific times throughout the year to promote key services, such as hosting a priority services awareness week.



### Medium term one to two years



### Benefits

By providing clearer, more targeted and diverse ways of communicating, we can ensure our services are inclusive, easier for customers understand and provide better awareness of the services available.



### Key Metrics



We'll look to increase the satisfaction score of our priority customers from 68% to 90% by 2030.



We'll aim to increase the percentage of customers who feel Southern Water supports their needs well from 66% to 80% by 2030.



We'll regularly monitor stakeholder engagement with our customers and conduct surveys to understand the impact of our services in our shared communities.



By increasing awareness and improving communication, we'll work to expand the reach of our Priority Services Register increasing from 16% to 26% by 2030.

4

Support when you need it most



## Personas

To help us better understand and support our customers that need extra help we'll create and use business wide personas when developing products and designing services.



### Audience



Physical  
vulnerability



Non-physical  
vulnerability



Financial  
vulnerability



### Approach



We'll create a range of personas, based on our customer insight, demographic data and industry input, designed to reflect the challenges and needs of our customers.



We'll engage outside input, using our stakeholders and their expertise when developing our personas to ensure all characteristics are considered and the personas are relevant to our industry.



Our personas will become an integral part of our business development processes to ensure inclusivity with all our services and offerings.



### Short term one to two years



### Benefits

Using Persona's across the business will give us a clearer picture of the needs and challenges faced by those that need extra help and will make sure we continue to develop and deliver services that are inclusive for all.



### Key Metrics

- ✓ To make sure our services remain as inclusive as possible, we'll continue to maintain our BSI consumer vulnerability inclusive services certificate each year.
- ✓ to make sure our colleagues are best placed to support our customers we'll maintain a minimum annual training completion rate of 95% within the required timeframes year on year.
- ✓ To make sure our actions are having an impact we will aim to increase the percentage of customers who feel we support their needs well from 66% to 80% by 2030.
- ✓ To measure the impact of any internal training, process and service enhancements, we'll aim to increase the % of colleagues who feel they can support customers effectively by 2030.

4

Support when you need it most



## Vulnerability Ambassadors Programme

To help raise awareness of the challenges faced by customers that may need extra help and to widen the reach of the support available within the business we'll create an internal ambassador programme to share best practise, training and lived experiences with the wider business.



### Audience



Physical  
vulnerability



Non-physical  
vulnerability



Financial  
vulnerability



### Approach



We'll engage colleagues from a wide range of functions across the business who are passionate about vulnerability and are aligned with our vision to make sure that everyone regardless of their circumstances can access the service they need.



Our ambassadors will form a community within the business where regular opportunities to share experiences, upskill and continuously improve will be facilitated.



We'll provide access to the bespoke training our Here to Help team receive to enable our ambassadors to take this across their business function. Our ambassadors will be able use their skills to promote awareness, be a point of contact for their area and gather lived experiences to support continued learning.



**Medium term**  
**one to two years**



### Benefits

By creating an internal ambassador programme, we can promote inclusivity across the business, helping to ensure our strategy continues to deliver on its goals and make sure the customer is always at the heart of what we do.



### Key Metrics

- ✓ We'll look to increase the satisfaction score of our priority customers from 68% to 90% by 2030.
- ✓ We'll continue to maintain our BSI consumer vulnerability inclusive services certificate.
- ✓ To make sure that our actions are having an impact we'll aim to increase the percentage of customers who feel Southern Water supports their needs well from 66% to 80% by 2030.
- ✓ To ensure our colleagues are best placed to support our customers we will maintain a minimum annual training completion rate of 95% within the required timeframes year on year.
- ✓ To measure the impact of any internal training, process and service enhancements, we'll aim to increase the % of colleagues who feel they can support customers effectively by 2030.



# Putting things right

**We're committed to providing the best service possible and hold ourselves to the highest standards. If we fall short, we'll take steps to put things right.**

## An interruption to your water supply

If we need to carry out planned work that involves turning of water supplies for more than four hours, we'll let customers know at least 48 hours before we start. We'll also provide details of when we expect to finish. If we don't do this, or the water supply is not restored when we said it would be, we'll automatically credit customers' water accounts with £30.00.

If there's an unplanned interruption such as a burst, we aim to restore water supplies as quickly as possible. If the water is not restored within 12 hours, we'll automatically credit customers' water accounts with £30, and additionally a further payment of £30 will be made for each additional period of 12 hours during which the interruption continues.



## Appointments

We understand it's not always convenient to arrange appointments and we'll do our best to provide the best time to suit our customers' needs.

- If we book an appointment, we'll always state if this will take place in the morning (before 12pm) or afternoon (after 12pm). A request can also be made for the visit to occur in a two-hour period (if preferred).
- If we book the appointment incorrectly and don't specify a morning or afternoon, or two-hour slot, we'll automatically credit customer's water account with £20.
- If we don't keep the appointment as made (the agreed day, morning or afternoon slot, or requested two-hour period, as specified), we'll automatically credit the customer's water services account with £50.
- If we fail to make the appointment or cancel the appointment with less than 24 hours' notice, we'll automatically credit customer's water services account with £20.



## Priority Services

\*New Guaranteed Standard to be introduced  
We're dedicated to providing our priority customers with the highest level of service to meet their needs.

If we are unable to deliver the additional help a customer is registered for, as an example delivering bottled water in a supply outage, we'll automatically credit customer's water services account with £50.

There are other occasions where, if we don't meet our high standards, customers will be automatically entitled to a credit and you can find full details of this [here](#).

We want making things right to be as simple as possible and when we don't meet the standards we've set or are required from us, we will automatically credit our customers water accounts without them having to contact us. We will write to let customers know what we've done and why.

If our customers feel they have not received the right service from us, they would like to make a complaint about the service they have received, or they are entitled to an automatic credit and they have not received it, we'll be happy to help resolve the query and can be contacted by telephone, email, WhatsApp message or [online via our website](#).

# Data protection

## 1. Lawful bases for processing personal data:

We understand that customers value their personal information and privacy, so we treat this with care. We only collect and process information when we have a reason for doing so and where that reason is permitted under data protection law.

For those customers on our Priority Services Register we need personal information, often sensitive information, to plan and deliver our services. We do this under the lawful basis of substantial public interest, in line with ICO guidance on this matter.

Where a customer's data is used to provide a service, such as register on our Priority Services Register, we will always provide details of where to find our privacy notice when confirming their registration.

### We use customer data for the following priority services:

- **Delivery of alternative water supplies** – During a supply outage, where we deliver alternative supplies of water, we may sometimes prioritise the supply deliveries based on individual needs. In a planned outage we may use this prioritisation to communicate our plans and any impact to our services.
- **Additional Communications** – To make sure we can contact customers in the way they prefer we may use personal data to identify different communication needs, such as braille, or large print bills.
- **Priority contact** – We may provide additional or tailored contact ahead of any proposed services we're planning to deliver, for example a new meter instalment. This will allow us to provide additional support where needed in these circumstances.
- **Home visits** – If additional time to answer the door, or assisted visits have been requested during home visits we'll use data to help us identify this requirement.

### Use and sharing of personal data for extra help (outside of priority services):

We may use data under the lawful basis of Legitimate Interests. For example, considering financial circumstances to allocate appropriate tariffs, or in specific circumstances, such data may be shared with third parties, such as neighbouring water companies, to complete billing processes.

These lawful bases ensure compliance with data protection laws while allowing us to deliver essential services effectively.

### Requesting data removal and privacy policy access:

Customers can request the removal of their personal data under certain conditions, such as when the data is no longer needed or if consent is withdrawn. Our full privacy policy outlines these rights and provides further details on how customers can do this. The policy is accessible through our [website](#) for full guidance.

# Continuous improvement

## Listening to our customers is part of what we do every day.

This includes activities such as customer research, analysis of data (e.g. contact data, complaints of social media monitoring), sharing insight with other companies and tracking of customers priorities and their expectations. Our insight work allows us to have a deep understand of what our customers want and help to drive improvements in what we deliver.

In 2024-25 we engaged with over 50,000 customers for direct feedback and views on our service and future plans, representing over 10,000 hours of engagement. We have analysed millions of data points including social listening, complaints, demographic data and externally produced reports.

Our Water Futures 2030 (household customers) consumer group continue to be central to our engagement with customers in the last year. Our Customer and Communities Challenge Group, made up of experts, helped review, challenge and improve our plans. The groups follow best practice guidance, as set out by the Consumer Council for Water (CCW), to provide a continuous dialogue on both our current delivery and future planning. Increased public scrutiny of the sector and increasing investment plans for the future has placed greater emphasis on our need for continued engagement. We track major events, media impact, importance of priorities, run social listening and analyse consumer trends.

For our Vulnerable Strategy our continuous improvement programme will be underpinned by insight that includes:

1. **Insight 365** – Our regular and continuous insight will ensure we keep our finger to the pulse to identify and understand major trends and influences.
2. **Bespoke Priority Services Tracking** – We're moving our annual PSR satisfaction survey to six monthly waves. Each wave will engage at least 200 Priority Services Register customers to understand their feedback.
3. **Customer Challenge Group (CCG)** – Our senior stakeholder challenge group.
4. **Affordability Tracking** – Every six months we track affordability of services, household bills and water with a representative sample of 1,000 customers.
5. **Annual Strategic Review** – Review % of PSR, best practice, review with CCG and CCW to provide flexibility then adapt as needed.

As we enter 2025–26, the latest data continues to show concern for the rising cost of living. Customers have felt that the costs have increased above income levels, and they're making choices about how best to spend their money – and some are really struggling to make ends meet.

With the increase to water bills, our customers want to be able to understand that investment in the infrastructure puts them first by protecting their local environment and ensuring reliable services for future generations. Those that are struggling most need access to the right level of support to help. Customers want to see what is happening in their own local community and our detailed insight helps personalise our engagement to provide the most relevant information that want to see.

## Looking to the future

We are committed to making our plans relevant, flexible, and adaptable to the constantly evolving needs of our customers. We will continue to listen as we progress through our strategy, using a combination of insight, partnership expertise and data to identify and explore innovative ways we can improve.

Using our strategic framework to identify gaps in our current services, including our future plans, we will make sure we provide the right support at the right time.

## Moving forwards

We are fully committed to not only continuing, but significantly improving the level of support provided to our customers. By 2030, our customer-led actions will ensure we are 'brilliant at the basics' providing a solid base to build, flex and improve to deliver the services our customers expect.

# Continuous improvement continued

Key metrics include:

	Measure	Reporting frequency	March 2025 score	March 2030 target
PSR awareness	% of all customers aware of the PSR	Annually	57%	75%
PSR reach	% of customers supported on our Priority Services Register	Annually	16%	26%
Social Tariff	Number of customers supported by Essentials tariff	Annually	158,000	182,000
Customer satisfaction	% of customers satisfied with overall service from Southern Water	Six monthly	68%	90%
PSR is meeting needs	% of customers that feel Southern Water supports their needs well	Six monthly	66%	80%
Satisfaction with incident management (loss of supply)	Average score (out of 10) of PSR customers rating support through a loss of supply	Ad Hoc (following major incident)	5.7	7
GSS payments for Priority Services not received	Reporting metric of customers who have received a Guaranteed Standards Payment for non delivery of Priority Service	Annually	TBC	TBC
BSI inclusive Services KiteMark	An independent assessment of our services for consumer vulnerability requirements	Annually	Certified	Continued Certification
CCW Vulnerability matrix assessment	Assessment of water providers overall vulnerability measures	Annually	TBC	TBC



# Making sure our strategy works

## Measuring success and expanding the services where and when we can.

We want to be clear on the progress of our actions and the impact of any additional extra support we provide. Our measures will be reviewed monthly by our Executive Performance Committee, and annually by our Environment and Social Governance Board (ESG) to make sure our strategy is working, remains relevant and delivers support where it is needed most. We recognise the need to be flexible and are committed to reviewing our strategy each year as part of our governance process. We'll track our performance by:

- Tracking the impact of our plans through our annual PSR satisfaction score. We'll monitor the level of satisfaction with our overall service for our priority customers to understand where we are performing well and where we may be falling short. This insight will allow us to perform gap analysis and introduce improvements where necessary. Currently at 68% we aim to improve this to 90% by 2030.
- Committing to achieving and maintaining the common performance commitment targets for contacting priority customers as set out by Ofwat. By committing to attempting to contact 90% of customers who have been on the Priority Service Register for two years, and making actual contact with 35% of customers, we can be confident we have up to date information on our customers, allowing us to provide the right support where it's needed.
- Aiming to increase the percentage of customers who feel we support their needs. By tracking this measure, we can understand and identify areas for improvements across all our services. Currently at 66% we aim to achieve 80% by 2030, making sure our actions are making a difference.
- Training compliance. We want to make sure our colleagues have the right skills and support to help our customers, and everyone has access to the information they need. We'll monitor our training framework to ensure compliance with required training modules, gaining a minimum 95% compliance each year as well as looking at innovative ways to build the skillset of our colleagues.
- By extending assistance through our social tariff. We plan to increase the number of customers we support through our Essentials Tariff to 182,000 by 2030. We currently provide financial support to over 158,000 customers. By extending financial assistance to an additional 24,000 customers, more customers on lower incomes will benefit from a bill reduction.
- Priority Services Register awareness. We recognise that data shows up to 50% of households will be eligible for priority service at some point. Our aim is to make sure everyone is aware of the support available. To improve awareness, we'll use targeted campaigns maximising our current platforms and stakeholder networks, as well as looking at innovative ways to reach our communities. Currently at 57% we plan to increase customer awareness to 75% by 2030 so no one misses out on the support they need.
- By increasing awareness of our Priority Register and the services offered. We plan to use targeted, insight driven campaigns to help increase the reach of our Priority Services Register. We'll work to improve our awareness in the communities that need us most to help achieve our goal of increasing the total support offered from 16% to 26% by 2030. Meaning an additional 195,000 customers will receive the support they need.
- By measuring satisfaction with our Incident Management. While we work hard to reduce the risk of major incidents, we want to make sure when they do occur, we respond quickly and with the right support. We'll reach out to customers impacted by large scale incidents to understand their experience and how we performed during this critical period. Currently at 5.7%, we aim to achieve an average satisfaction score of 7% by 2030.
- Guaranteed Service Standards (GSS) Payments for Priority Services. We aim to provide the best possible service and look to learn when things don't go as promised. We'll track payments issued on occasions where we've fallen short. We'll use this measure to help us identify gaps in our services and improve how we provide the support needed. TBC.
- BSI inclusive Services KiteMark. We're committed to achieving the BSI Inclusive Services certificate ISO 22458:2022 for Consumer Vulnerability each year, visibly demonstrating to our customers and stakeholders our commitment to designing and delivering services that are inclusive for all.



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