

Our Customer Care Strategy to 2030

In brief - draft version

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OUR
BUSINESS
PLAN
2025-2030

Executive Summary

As the only provider of water and waste water services to customers across our region, we need to consider and understand the needs and expectations of all our customers. This is especially important for those customers who may need additional support, both financial or due to other vulnerabilities. We absolutely recognise how critical it is to ensure that every customer can understand, access, and receive the help from us that they need.

We don't want any customer to struggle because they have extra needs or find it hard to afford their water bills and our Customer Care Strategy sets out what we are doing to support all the customers we serve, and the commitments we are making to improve on the support and help we provide by 2030.

We already work hard to identify customers in need of additional support and provide a tailored package of help.

- For customers who are financially vulnerable, we have an affordability toolkit that includes discounted tariffs, payment breaks, debt support and help to reduce bills by being more water efficient.
- We also provide support for customers who need extra help due to a non-financial vulnerability, for example a medical condition, disability or being older. We are proactive in helping customers sign up for our Priority Services Register, which means they are helped first in an emergency. Our teams have specialist training to ensure they respond sensitively to customer needs.

Our draft plans for 2025-2030 will build on this platform to provide even better support for customers. We will continue to use data to help us identify the customers and communities who have the greatest need of support.

We will also engage with communities across all regions to help inform customers and raise awareness of our plans and activities. We will improve the customer experience through measures such as rolling out smart metering with effective, easy to engage with customer journeys, and will also ensure processes to provide support through our social tariffs are as smooth as possible.

Our ultimate aim is to ensure that customers get the support and care they need, whatever their situation or stage of life. We want to continue to build our strategies to improve services even further.



Our Customer Care Services

Providing an effortless customer experience and tailored care to our customers who need it the most is vitally important to us. We have a responsibility to understand which customers need additional support, and to make sure that we have support in place.

Clean fresh water on demand is a right that should be available to all, regardless of financial circumstances, accessibility of homes, health, age or ability to use technology. By providing a tailored service to those who need extra support, we will ensure nobody goes without the water they need.

We provide support focussed on two areas.

Non-financial Vulnerabilities

Many customers require a helping hand at some time in their life. There may be many reasons for this and we are proud to be accredited through the KiteMark scheme as providing inclusive services. We are constantly looking to improve and expand on the support we offer, and provide a range of services to support those that need it. Our staff are also trained to identify those customers who may need support, so that they can provide a safe, reassuring presence.

To register for our Priority Service please see our contact details on the last page.

Financial Vulnerabilities

We know many customers are under financial pressure due to the high cost of living. We provide support to ensure no customers are in water poverty.

Read the full document [here](#).

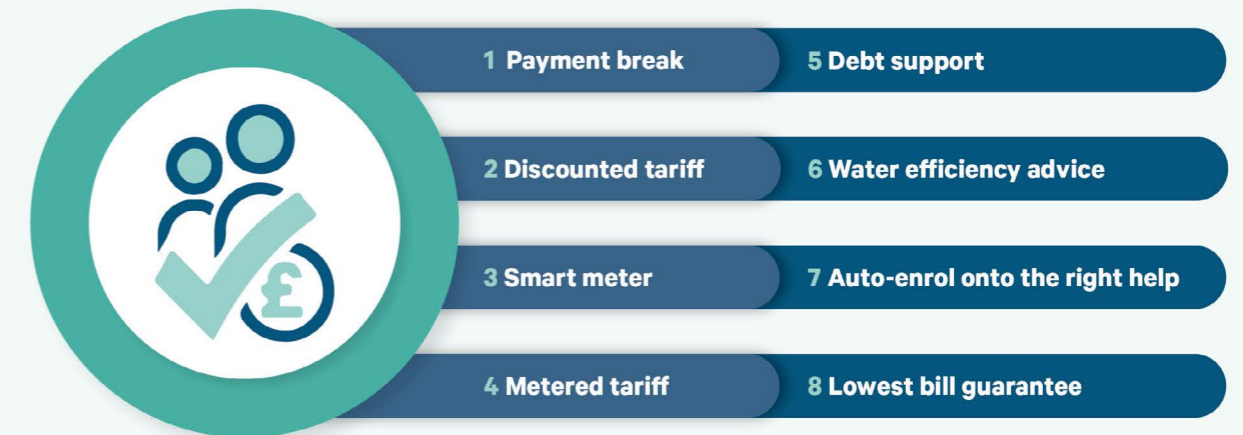


What we are doing to help

Affordability strategies

- **Good management practises.** We work efficiently and plan infrastructure investments carefully, to manage the impact on customer bills.
- **Working to identify people struggling** with their bills so we can provide advice and support.
- **Compensating customers** if we do not meet our promises.
- **Supplying smart meters** so customers only pay for the water they use, and can track their usage.
- **Supporting customers with water efficiency** measures to help reduce consumption.

Our Affordability Toolkit



Strategy for helping customers in water debt

We aim to keep our bills as low as possible, making them affordable for all. However, we recognise that even so, some customers will struggle to be able to afford their water services. We are committed to ensuring no customer is in water poverty, and have strategies to support customers with their water bills.

- Good management practises. We work efficiently and plan infrastructure investments carefully, to manage the impact on customer bills.
- Supplying smart meters so customers only pay for the water they use, and can track their usage.
- Supporting customers with water efficiency measures to help reduce consumption.

Our affordability toolkit provides a range of support that can be tailored to customer needs.

Strategy for helping customers in water debt.

How we provide support to those who need it most

- We train our staff to identify customers in need of extra care and help them quickly with services including the provision of bottled water should it be necessary, 'knock and wait' billing and communicating through a nominated friend, family member or other representative.
- We encourage customers to join our Priority Services Register should they need to and support them in doing so.
- We have established datashares to help reduce the need for customers to more than once with either their energy or water supplier in the areas we serve.
- Customers registered for Priority Services will be contacted once every two years to check their needs are up to date.
- We check in with our customers every two years to review how we can support those who need it the most. So we can improve the way we do it. We hold annual workshops with partner organisations, including a wide range of community charities. We have a Lived Experience Panel to improve services and support innovation.
- We carry out customer research to monitor satisfaction with the Priority Services Register.
- We run regular community outreach events to help eligible customers sign up for the Priority Services Register.
- We use our data to help target the areas most likely to need additional support.
- Relevant staff are trained to identify signs of customers needing additional help. This is supplemented with external training from organisations including MIND, Centre for the Deaf in Bristol and Dementia Friends.
- We hold the Inclusive Service Provision BS ISO 22458

Accessible Communication

A tailored service to support customers who need extra care

When a customer signs up to the Priority Services Register, we record the details of their need to help us target our support. They are sent a friendly message welcoming them to the service.

Customers can choose communication formats such as braille or large print, which we use wherever possible when contacting them.

When an incident occurs, our systems help us identify which affected customers need extra support. Where appropriate, we provide alternative water supplies including bottled water.


Tailored SMS messages provide customers with alerts and updates. Our welcome letters and website sets out what customers can expect. After an event, all customers impacted by a loss of water supply are surveyed to help us improve our service.

All our teams are trained to support vulnerable customers. External subject matter experts deliver additional training - most recently, from Mind and the Centre for the Deaf in Bristol. Field teams use a mobile knowledge base for instant access to support.

Good communication is critical for customers who need extra support. We provide:

- Tailored written communications as requested for example, braille, large print, different languages.
- Welcome information to the Priority Services Register
- A dedicated web page for what help to expect during an incident
- Bi-annual check in to ensure our records of customer needs are up to date
- We plan to use more posters in rural communities to signpost sources of help
- Tailored communication for planned work
- Tailored communication for supply outages

Services we offer to our customers on PSR:




- 1 Communicating in preferred format dependant on need i.e. braille, different languages, BSL, large print, Text Relay
- 2 Water delivery in incidents dependant on customer need
- 3 Contacting in advance of a supply interruption
- 4 Extra meter readings and relocation of meter if we can do so
- 5 Named nominee to receive bills and other communications
- 6 Reading your bills to you over the telephone or in person
- 7 Selecting a password



Get a little extra help

If you have additional needs or a disability, you can sign up to our Priority Services register for free.



Additional assistance, whatever your needs

If you need extra support due to age, ill health, disability, age or you even have a temporary change to your personal situation, we can help with our priority services register.

What is Priority Services?	-	What is Priority Services?
Updates on supply interruptions	+	Priority Services is for customers who need extra support. By signing up for free, there are a range of services that we offer than can help make your life easier. Depending on your needs this can include having your meter read more regularly to having your bills in large print.
Communicating together	+	
Reading your water meter	+	
Customers with home dialysis	+	

Our Customer Care Strategy commitments 2024-2030

Non-financial vulnerability: what actions we are taking

Pillar	Commitments 2025-30	How we will achieve this
Using data wisely	Using data, we will identify customers in need of support from our vulnerability support	<p>Across all our regions we will use data, both internally held and reliable external data to identify our hard-to-reach customers that are in most need of our support.</p> <p>We will also continue to use social media, company newsletter and information on bills to reach customers.</p>
	Increase our use of data shares to help us target the most accurate support to customers who need it	<p>Establish a two-way data share between Bournemouth and Wessex for PSR so customers in the Bournemouth area have the full support from both their waste and water bill.</p> <p>Drive automation of two-way data shares.</p> <p>Two-way data share with suppliers.</p> <p>Explore PSR data shares with retail energy providers.</p>
	Explore IT options to help staff have the information they need to service the customer efficiently	<p>Review the best use of our systems to flag specific customer needs for our staff to service them.</p>
Growing partnerships	Identify partnerships gaps based on our coverage of support and data	<p>Use our existing data on our partnerships, along with insights from the Local Insight tool to help us identify the most needed areas to explore new partnerships, e.g. in rural communities and to help the digital excluded communities access information about priority services.</p>
	Testing our future plans with our partners	<p>Continue to host annual debt advice workshops in the Bristol Region, which include seeking feedback on our plans.</p> <p>Establish annual workshops with our partners across Devon, Cornwall, and Bournemouth to gather feedback on our plans.</p>
Community engagement	Using a data-led approach to focus our community engagement	<p>Across all our regions we will use data, both internally held and reliable external data to identify our communities that need additional support from our digital customer communications and service to get the help they need.</p> <p>Using the data tool to ensure the community strategy is tailored to the needs to the area.</p>
	Expand our messaging into our communities on water efficiency, metering and PSR through our staff	<p>Spread awareness of our campaigns through staff, equipping them with literature and digital products to share.</p> <p>We will use our data to better understand our hotspots of digitally excluded customers, and ensure we are robustly and efficiently meeting their needs such as community events and printed rather than digital communication about the topics. This will help address our high levels of customers who are digital excluded in the South West Water area.</p>
	A multi-channel community engagement strategy including social media, face to face, pop up stalls, literature. Targeting the best channel to reach the customers who can benefit from the messaging	<p>We will use our data to help us target the best channel to reach the customers who can benefit from the messaging. We will ensure this includes the key priorities for our customers this is currently understanding storm overflows impacting their local beach, water efficiency and keeping bills low through metering or a tariff.</p>
	We will start to complete impact assessments of our community activities, review the level of interaction regarding additional support	<p>We will do this across all of our community activities and compare the results to what we expected of the region. This will help inform our future plans and community activities, and that it is tailored to our customer needs.</p>
	We will use our community events to test new ideas and service options for customers who need additional care	<p>Our community events are relaxed, customers are happy and have time to talk to us, it is a great opportunity to ask about new technology or literature that we offer. This builds on similar testing we have used our partners for (such as reviewing the accessibility of our Bristol Water website with Scope), we will continue to do this. Extending the concept to customers in the community is a new minimum expectation from Ofwat's draft vulnerability guidance.</p>



Financial Vulnerabilities: what actions we are taking

Pillar	Our commitment	How we will achieve this
Using your data wisely	Using data we will identify customers in need of support to remove them from water poverty.	We will use our water poverty data tool to identify those customers in or at risk of water poverty.
	We will auto enrol them onto the right support.	
	We will proactively contact customers who can take themselves out of water poverty by being more water efficient or switching to a metered tariff.	
	We will use intelligent data sets to target our affordability support.	We will use data to identify customers that are in most need of our support.
		We will use data to apply the support offered by our affordability toolkit to reach those most in need.
	Increase our use of data shares to help us target the most accurate support to customers who need it.	Establish a two way data share between Bournemouth and Wessex for customers on a social tariff and voids, so customers in the Bournemouth area have the full support from both their waste and water bill.
Growing partnerships with our customers	Identify partnerships gaps based on our coverage of support and data.	We will use our water poverty tool and existing data on our partnerships, along with insights from the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) to help us identify the areas to explore new partnerships, e.g., in rural communities and to help the digital excluded communities access our financial support.
	Testing our future plans with our partners.	We will host annual workshops with our partners which will include the opportunity to provide feedback on our plans.
		We will also share our draft plans with our partners individually for feedback.
	We will continue to listen to our FreshStart board.	Continue to hear feedback from our FreshStart board on our future plans.

Engaging with our community	Using a data-led approach to focus our community engagement.	We will use data to identify our communities that need additional support from our digital customer communications and service to get the help they need.
		We will use the data tool and new technologies to ensure the community strategy is tailored to the needs in the area.
	Annual refresh of our messaging into our communities on our key priorities relevant to the communities we are working with.	Spread awareness of our campaigns through a variety of channels including social media, newsletters, community roadshows and staff, equipping them with literature and digital products to share.
	A multi-channel community engagement strategy including social media, face to face, pop up stalls and literature Targeting the best channel to reach the customers who can benefit from the messaging.	We will use our data to help us target the best channel to each of the customers who can benefit from the information.
	We will ensure where we are in a community for an event – for example, a WaterShare+ meeting – and if it is an area that is also income deprived, that we support with clear messages from our affordability toolkit.	
	We will support our customers and communities through our community funds.	Continue to provide our customers access to our community fund.
Improving your customer journey	Introducing smart metering to help customers take better ownership and lower their water usage and bill.	Rolling out smart metering to provide our customers with information they need to conserve water and lower their bills.
	Campaigns to encourage customers to recognise that they pay for what they use and lower their bill.	We will continue to offer the lowest bill guarantee.
	Use of data shares to enhance the customer journey.	We will continue to work with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to ensure support tariff customer journeys are as easy as possible for the customer.

This table lists the our commitments included in our Customer Care Strategy to 2030. We will refresh this annually.



Contact Us

South West Water

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Website: www.southwestwater.co.uk

Bristol Water

Phone: 0345 702 3797
Website: www.bristolwater.co.uk

Bournemouth Water

Phone: 0344 346 2020
WhatsApp: 07862 118803
Website: www.bournemouthwater.co.uk

Isles of Scilly

Please refer to South West Water website for Isle of Scilly services.

