

Water Resilient
Communities

Newport



Cefnogaeth



Welcome

At the core of The Water Resilient Communities Project is a commitment that goes beyond business as usual. It is about identifying opportunities to reach out to people about more than just spades in the ground and embracing the responsibility we hold towards all aspects of the communities we serve. It draws on a values-led approach, which has been instrumental in shaping the project and the positive impact it has had on the community.

We have encouraged more people who may genuinely struggle to pay their bills sign up to one of our social tariffs; we have also used it as a chance to get more people to register on our Priority Service Register, to understand what extra support they may need. We have offered free lessons to all schools in the area to educate our future customers, as well as providing free water efficiency support to all homes in the area.

The journey began alongside a major investment programme in the Rhondda Fach area, in the South Wales Valleys – and it has evolved as we have moved focus to Rhyl, Rhymney, Bargoed during a challenging Covid-19 backdrop, and more recently, Newport. This brochure is testament to the remarkable journey embarked upon in our efforts to build community resilience, and the effect that it has had on people in Newport at a time where living costs are at their highest.

What sets this project apart is its' unwavering dedication to partnerships, as well as our commitment to understanding some of our communities' biggest challenges. By listening attentively to the voices of the community to inform our interventions, and collaborating effectively to overcome adversity, it helps to enable lasting change. Our team forged strong connections with local stakeholders, ensuring that we are an integral part of the community. By seeking coproduction opportunities, we have also tapped into additional knowledge within the community itself, resulting in solutions that are truly meaningful.



Pete Perry
Chief Executive

Contents

Welcome	2	To be purposeful	10
Project overview	4	— Taking the call centre into the community centre	10
Newport challenges	5	— Future generations – start today	10
Our approach	6	— Building bridges to employment	11
To be proactive	6	— Together, stronger: a lifeline for struggling customers	11
— Case study: supporting Maria from Newport	7	— Case study: celebrating community and resilience – a family event	12
— Blockage removal	7	The results – in numbers	13
— Reducing debt	7	Vulnerable customer support	14
— Ongoing support	7	Debt support	14
To be pioneering	8	Water efficiency support	15
— Partnership with Grow Social Capital	8	Career and employability support	15
— Doing <i>with</i> , not <i>at</i> , our community: our co-production journey	8	Education support	16
— Case study: putting learning into practice at the Eden Gate Centre	9	Blockage support	16
		Project legacy: a collaborative journey towards community support	17

Project overview

How do you go above and beyond to help customers in areas of deep-rooted deprivation during a cost-of-living crisis?

For us, it is by developing a values-led, co-produced, supportive place-based programme, using pioneering new tools and constructive insight, as we help to gradually build the capacity of households and communities to be more resilient. For customers this "***made a big difference***", but also for Dŵr Cymru and its people, enabled them to grow and feel more purposeful through their work.

In Newport, our strategy emphasised collaborative efforts across six key support services who have been driving forward the activity:

- vulnerable customer
- debt
- career and recruitment
- education
- water efficiency
- waste networks

Reaching out to other recognised and trusted partners in Newport for insight and opportunities, we adopted an integrated and collective approach to ensure that activities are mutually beneficial for our business, our customers, and broader society. As it is across all functions of the company, the well-being of future generations has been a guiding light throughout this journey, with project activities mapped against each goal. Crucially, its' activities are not undertaken by any dedicated resource – it simply involves a shift in the way that we do things, and the learning that we take from it.



Newport challenges

A wider assessment of the state of economic, social, environmental, and cultural well-being of the area, the Gwent Public Service Board offered the following summary of Newport in 2021:

The Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) of Allt-yr-yn 2, Stow Hill 3, Pillgwenlly 1, Pillgwenlly 3, Pillgwenlly 4 and Shaftesbury 1 are ranked in the top 10% most deprived areas in Wales (overall). Stow Hill 2 ranked in the top 50% most deprived and Pillgwenlly 2 ranked in the top 20% most deprived. In overall terms Pillgwenlly is one of most deprived wards in Newport, with three of its four LSOA's ranked in the top 10% most deprived areas in Wales.

Further analysis shows that the top 10% most deprived LSOAs within the project area, as indicated by the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, are characterised by younger populations. They face significant issues in community safety, education, employment, and income. Pillgwenlly 1 and 4 show particularly severe employment and income deprivation. Health, housing, and environmental challenges are also prevalent in these moderately populated, highly deprived communities.



Our approach

The **pioneering, purposeful, and proactive** work of the project provides an exemplar of responsible corporate partnerships for others to learn from, adapt and follow.

To be proactive

Turning intentions into actions involves proactively working with others. Externally, with over twenty groups and organisations involved in the initiative – from community centres to housing associations, homeless centres to schools – together we have been stronger.

Internally, the initiative also brings together teams working with vulnerable customers, water efficiency, human resources, education, waste networks and debt, to work with, not at its customers and communities. In doing so, it enabled a better response to shared challenges of adversity, such as rising inflation and wider environmental challenges.

After identifying stakeholders, we held a workshop to share views and ideas with the group to gain feedback. This, along with a growing intrinsic mentality to build new relationships on an ongoing basis, resulted in an extensive network of like-minded organisations.

Recognising the value of working with other local, trusted organisations, as well as how this might lead to co-production opportunities, our stakeholders included:

- Business in the Community (BITC) Place initiative
- Newport City Council
- Newport City Homes
- Newport Jobcentre Plus
- Grow Social Capital
- The Eden Gate Centre Newport
- The Co-Production Network for Wales
- Melin Homes
- Save the Children
- Newport MIND
- Future Generations Leadership Academy, Office of the Commissioner for Future Generations
- Aneurin Bevan University Health board: Integrated Well-being Network



Partners come together at the University of South Wales in Newport to listen harder and learn more about the challenges facing communities in the area.

Case study: supporting Maria from Newport

Maria is currently receiving treatment after being diagnosed with cancer. Unfortunately, she found herself with significant bill arrears, which was causing worry. In addition to this, Maria had recently experienced a blocked private drain in her garden which saw raw sewerage consuming her outdoor space. Alongside her already poor health, it was having a negative impact on her well-being.

A heightened presence in local community centres meant that her circumstances were raised via a local councillor with one of our Promotions Advisors within the Vulnerable Customer Community Team, Jody Perkins:

Jody said: *“Looking at Maria’s circumstances it was clear that we needed to step in to support and that it needed to be an integrated and collaborative approach.*

“Due to the valuable partnerships and the level of customer and partner trust that we had built in the Pillgwenlly area, as part of the wider Water Resilient Community project, we were able to arrange a level of support that exceeded Maria’s expectations. We worked with our Wastewater Assets and Debt support colleagues and were able to achieve some great outcomes.”

Blockage removal

As a sewerage company, it’s our responsibility to own and maintain the public and transferred (PST) sewerage networks within our operating area, with customers responsible for maintaining their private sewer. On inspecting her unique circumstances, our wastewater colleagues were able to get her wastewater flowing once again, and went above and beyond by cleaning her garden, allowing her to use her outdoor space once again.

Maria was also signposted for possible further support via local charities to help prevent this becoming an ongoing issue.

Councillor Jenkins, said: *“She had been visiting her family for a few days and came home to a lovely surprise, she could not believe it when she saw her garden had been cleared... Maria has asked me to pass on her thanks — she was overcome with emotion.”*

Reducing debt

Suffering from the effect of both current and older arrears, debt support colleagues were able to remove £1,400 of debt from her account.

Ongoing support

Maria was also added to the HelpU tariff, which supports eligible low-income households with a cap on the amount they must pay for water. In this instance, reducing her annual charge from £500 to £300, paid through an affordable and agreed Direct Debit to prevent further arrears from accumulating. She was also added to the Priority Services Register, which targets those customers that sometimes need a little extra help.

Councillor Jenkins added: *“This is all absolutely fantastic news I really can’t believe how much you have done for Maria it’s just wonderful! I have given Maria the amazing news she was very thankful and very emotional as she has been worried for so long.”*



To be pioneering

Partnership with Grow Social Capital

Working in partnership with social enterprise Grow Social Capital and using open-source social value tools produced by global collective; the Dublin Conversations, we established a values-led approach to inform a strategic narrative and drive our purposeful thinking and doing.

Using the Dublin Conversations 7 step 'Discover your purpose' process helped identify the project's values, persona, beliefs, change-making stories, social instincts, purposes, and prime purposefulness.

From these, five main project values were identified:

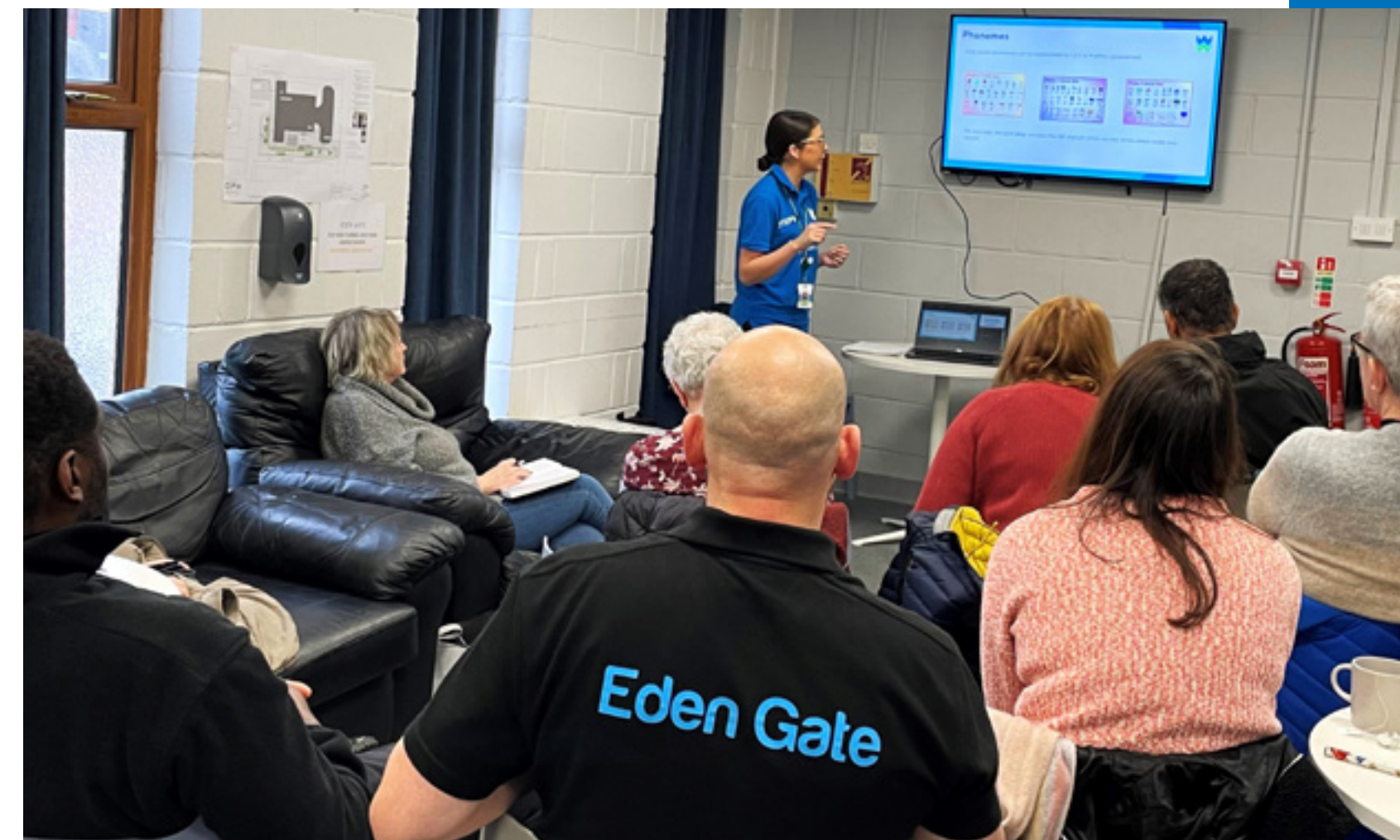
1. We work to achieve a greater common purpose
2. We respect our shared humanity with others
3. Responsibility for outcomes is shared by all sides
4. We deliver through collaboration and partnerships
5. We flexibly persevere. If at first, we don't succeed we try again, trying different ways to succeed.

These values went beyond slogans but became our core management tool that framed our actions.

The exercise deepened our ability to frame our thinking, doing, and communications in delivering the project.

Doing *with*, not *at*, our community: our co-production journey

As a project that delivers support, we were keen to make sure that our customers and community share responsibility for that support, making it as meaningful as possible. Whilst there is some way to go to realising its' co-production potential, our workshop with the Co-Production Network for Wales and subsequent advisory sessions, demonstrated the power of incorporating co-production values into the things we do. This is something that really meant something at the Eden Gate Centre in Newport – and as this project further evolves, will have a bigger part to play.



Healthy, vibrant, and sustainable communities require strong levels of social capital – the strength and power within communities, relationships, social norms, shared social identities, and shared values – or to use an IT metaphor, the operating system on which communities run. We need to connect with others at a far deeper level, through shared values, to effect real change together."

Andy Green, Director Grow Social Capital



Case study: putting learning into practice at the Eden Gate Centre

When we spoke to Eden Gate, following an introduction through Business in the Community (BITC), several points gave pause for thought. The opportunity to be involved in helping their guests to help themselves, was extremely worthwhile.

As we developed this unlikely partnership, it became more apparent how much we could do to help centre guests to overcome the barriers in their lives.

In keeping with the joined-up project approach, we delivered vulnerable customer surgeries, water efficiency audits, community funding (for a well-being garden), and adult literacy sessions. The latter was delivered collaboratively with the Literacy Trust to ensure as much impact as possible.

For centre guests, this really meant something; ***"I missed out, as a child, on a lot. So, this is what I really need. Give me a book, I'll struggle."***

Katie, 33, is a guest and regular attendee. After becoming homeless, Katie and her partner began attending Eden Gate and got involved with both the centre's drop in and their Shoulder 2 Shoulder programme.

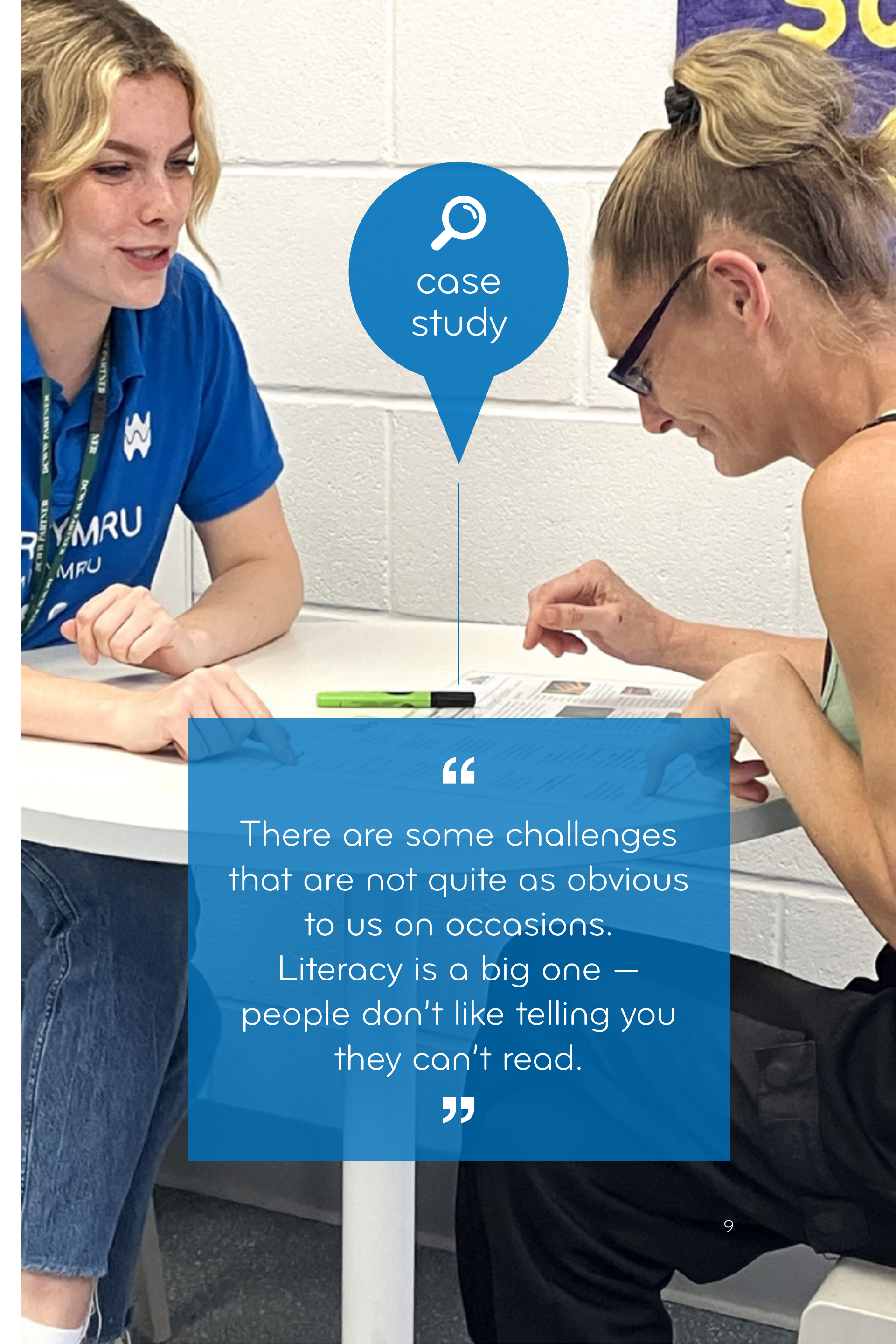
In July 2023, with the support of Dŵr Cymru and The National Literacy Trust, Eden Gate began running weekly literacy skills sessions for guests who wanted to improve their reading and writing skills. Katie signed up to take part, a key motivation for this being her desire to sit the driving theory test; the first step to her owning and driving a car.

Katie has greatly benefited from the one-to-one support received from the trained teachers volunteering their time from Dŵr Cymru and as a result, her reading skills and confidence have greatly improved over the sessions. Her progress has been noted by the teachers, Eden Gate staff and most importantly by Katie herself. Her increased

confidence led to Katie booking a driving theory test that she passed with flying colours. She is keen to continue building on her successes and is encouraging others to be inspired to take a similar approach.

This case study illustrates how working with an individual such as Katie to form positive experiences while gaining practical knowledge can have a huge impact and assist a person in their self-development. It also shows what can be achieved through the medium of effective partnership working to achieve common goals.

Katie summed it up; ***"I am so grateful to Eden Gate, the Education Team from Dŵr Cymru and Sarah from the Literacy Trust, who have really helped me. I would like to thank them for their support and patience. They listened to me and took the time to understand my difficulties with learning and reading. I hope that others will decide to get involved when they're ready"***.



“
There are some challenges that are not quite as obvious to us on occasions. Literacy is a big one – people don't like telling you they can't read.
”

To be purposeful

Taking the call centre into the community centre

How do you support customers who are struggling with debt, but don't want to talk about it?

For us, we took our debt advisors out of the call centre and into the community centre, building trust through word of mouth.

The result

Moving our debt advisors from the call centre into the community centre transformed customer interactions – providing accessible, personable assistance, and enabling customers to navigate through financial challenges with dedicated support.



I'm really nervous on the phone. I just came down, and the gentleman has helped me out. I'm just trying to sort my life out. Times are hard. Everything is getting on top of me lately. As long as I keep up with my new tariff payment, the arrears will be written off.



Future generations — start today

How do you ensure that future generations develop a breadth of skills, environmental knowledge, and inspire future interest in the utilities industry?

For us, it involves taking our education team into classrooms to deliver bespoke, practical, hands-on workshops.

The result

Enriching, informative and practical sessions helped inspire our future generations in the area. These free, curriculum-led, school visits covered a range of important environmental and sustainability themes, whilst also encouraging an early, positive attitude towards STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics) subjects.



Using those little microscopes, I looked at a dragonfly – it had a really long tail and big eyes!



To be purposeful

Building bridges to employment

How do you raise aspirations, and tackle unemployment?

For us, it involves working with work coaches from the local job centres, delivering employability workshops that lead to real opportunities within the company.

The result

By forging a constructive dialogue with Newport Job Centre Plus and progressing to support the Mentoring Circles initiative during Customer Service Month, and incorporating a pre-screening interview, it gave prospective employees the inspiration to land a role with the company.



It has given me a lot of background that I wouldn't have had before. I have much more knowledge to be able to apply for a job.



Together, stronger: a lifeline for struggling customers

How do you get information out there about the full range of support available for customers who may be struggling with their bill?

For us, it involved thinking outside the box, appreciating the unique and challenging situations facing some of our customers, and having a visible presence at a host of community hubs.

The result

From holding parent support surgeries on school sites during pupil drop-offs, taking our community van to supermarket car parks and working with housing associations, our people became a familiar and trusted sight. Testament to this is the vast number of customers and partners that attended The Riverfront Arts Centre in Newport during family fun support event, during half-term of November 2023.



We were paying £26 a fortnight for water, and we got it down to £22 a month – so that is a big difference; a big help.



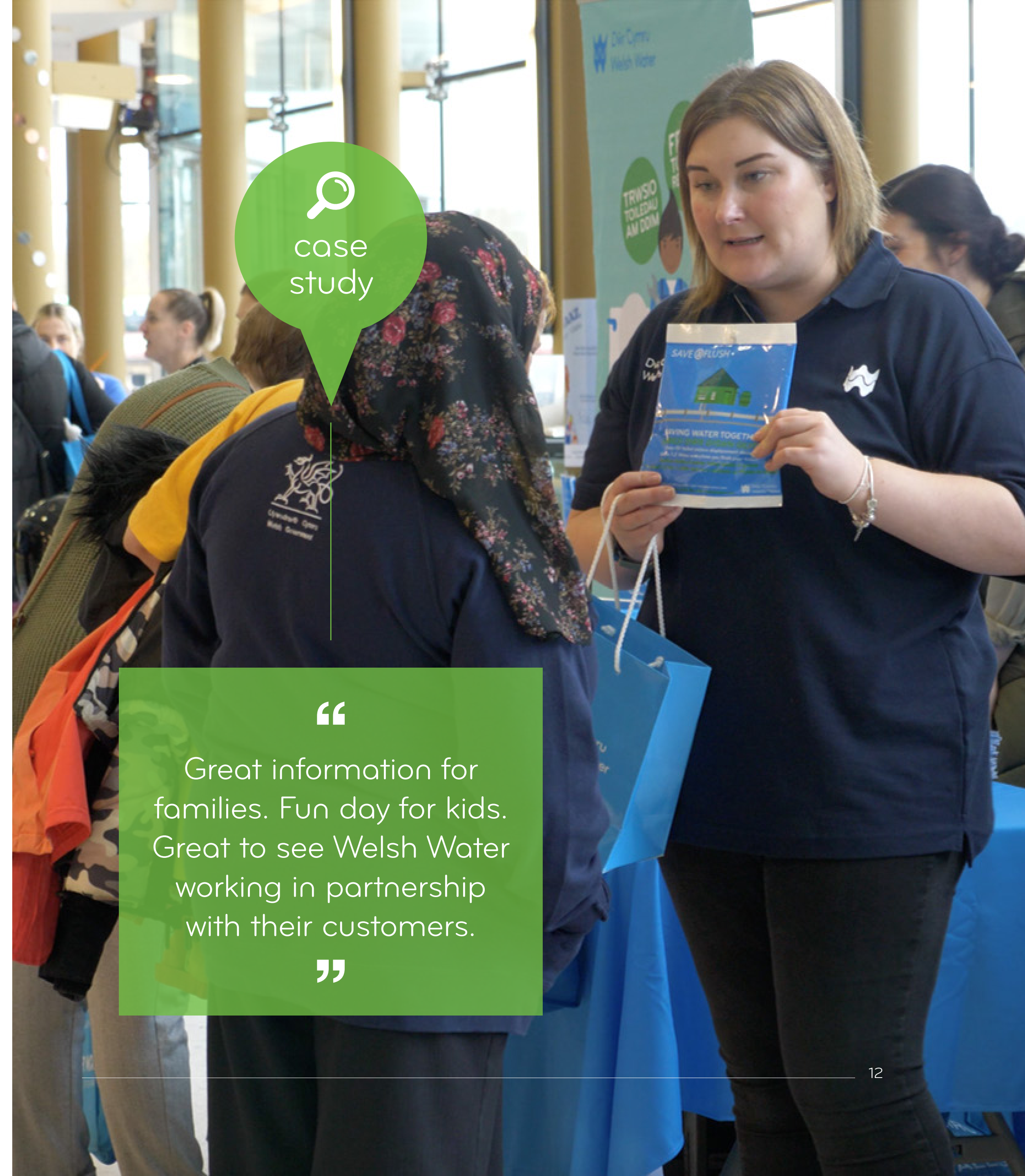
Case study: celebrating community and resilience — a family event

The activities of the Water Resilient Community Project in Newport culminated in a family event, led by the Vulnerable Customer Team and supported across the business. This gathering was not just a celebration but a testament to the strong partnerships achieved over the previous 18 months, and a demonstration of a collaborative drive to deliver support where it is needed the most. Held during the autumn half-term, it provided an opportune moment for families seeking support — and entertainment for their little ones — to get involved in cost free children's activities and convenient access to a variety of advice streams.

With over 37 organisations in attendance, the day was filled with activities, valuable support, information sessions, prize giveaways, refreshments and demonstrations. This diverse collaboration aimed to provide a comprehensive range of family related support services in a welcoming atmosphere, free from the stigma often associated with 'Cost of Living' events.

For us, the event brought together all project workstreams, from the Vulnerable Customer Team to debt, education to water efficiency, and beyond, each emphasising our commitment to supporting resilience, financial wellbeing, the overall health of our community members and linking closely to well-being of future generations (Wales) goals.

Our approach to this event — from co-producing promotional materials with Newport City Homes' online members, to carefully curating the list of activities — ensured relevance and engagement within the community. With over 300 customers in attendance and many of them taking the opportunity to reach out for support, it offers a template on how we, and others, can pitch an event of this nature in the future to deliver maximum social impact.



“
Great information for families. Fun day for kids. Great to see Welsh Water working in partnership with their customers.
”

The results — in numbers

The project is not about the numbers; it is more about making genuine and meaningful differences, and the learning that we can take from that, in everything we do.

However, within the project area, predominantly focusing on a geographic area of no more than 25km, and a population of approximately 40,000 people in the west of Newport, the numbers do tell a story...

37
events



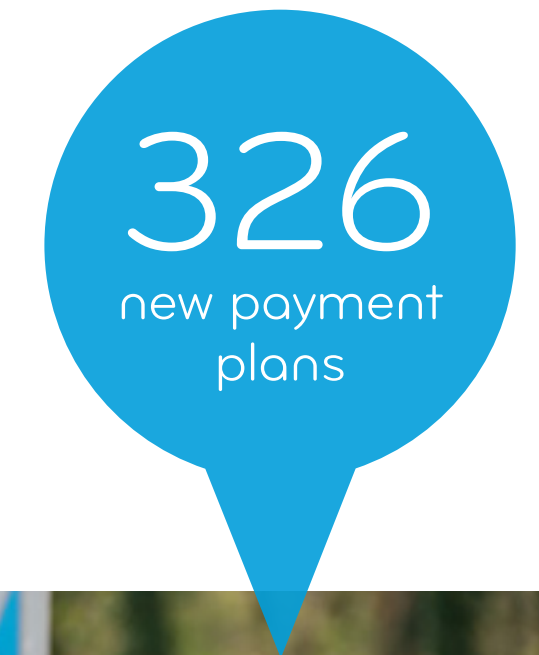
Vulnerable customer support

For residents, the sight of our blue community van became a familiar sight as our Vulnerable Customer team parked up in the heart of Newport's communities at **37 events**. The support also extended further to include collaborative partner events and the delivery of third-party training to further build awareness of customer support. This approach allowed a convenient way to **review 395 accounts** and save those customers thousands of pounds – whilst adding **333 to our Priority Service Register**, which offers a helping-hand to those who sometimes need a little extra help. Aided by this community presence and enriched by our collaborations, hundreds of customers from across the wider Newport area were supported onto our tariff for eligible low-income households.



Debt support

In a proactive approach to support customers struggling with debt, our Debt Team held community-based, face to face, pop up debt surgeries. Taking our debt support out of the call centre and into the community centre helped to display the empathy and caring traits of people who are normally supporting from the other end of a phone. Having reached out to over **2,692 customers** to advise them of our community presence, **41 particularly disengaged customers** came along to receive support at their nearest community hub. With over **326 new payment plans** established and many customers already empowered to make a positive change in their payment habits, the benefits of this holistic approach are already being felt.



Water efficiency support

Little changes make a big difference. As we experience warmer and dryer summers, the work of our Cartref team encourage our customers to use what they need – but not waste water, resonated with communities. The team distributed over **1,081 water saving devices** within the area, helping to foster a culture of sustainability through our Get Water Fit product offering. Repairing **196 leaky toilets** and undertaking an additional 100 property visits to some of the highest water-usage customers across the wider area also had a positive impact. In line with the project principles, the team explored collaborative opportunities with both Newport City Homes and Pobl Group – with the former resulting in visits, alongside our Vulnerable Customer Teams, to 9 over-50s accommodation complexes, distributing a further **191 products**.

repaired
196
leaky loos



Career and employability support

In an area which contains some of the highest unemployment rates in Wales, it adds extra significance to be able to support in the development and opportunities available in for local jobseekers. Our Talent & Development team worked closely with Newport Job Centre & The DWP in the area. One of the most notable activities involved holding a pre-screening event during Customer Service week, through the Job Centre Mentoring Circles, where **2 jobseekers** subsequently went on to gain employment with the company. Elsewhere within the project area, over **20 local jobseekers** were supported through targeted career events.

2
jobseekers
gained
employment



Education support

The Well-being of future generations influence everything we do as a company, and it's therefore especially appropriate that we work proactively within the education landscape. In Newport, our Education Team worked with schools, practitioners and pupils across the area, with almost **4,932 involved** in enriching learning opportunities as the team spent **84 hours in classrooms**. Making the most from our unique teacher secondment approach, we were also able to facilitate sessions with pupils often considered behaviourally challenging. Venturing into new pedagogic territory, our team's expertise was used to deliver **16 hours of literacy support** to members of the community, who are positioned on the cusp of homelessness.

84
classroom
hours



Blockage support

The unique way in which this project brings together vastly different functions of the business in an integrated approach is highlighted by the work of our Waste Network Teams. Their work to try to prevent problems in our sewers so that everything is flowing as it should, that our pipes are in good condition and that the wrong things aren't causing blockages continued. During the project timescale, the team undertook **34 sewer interventions** in the area, leading to cleansing works, repairs, cleaning of outfalls and installation of telemetry. **22 Customer Sewer Alarms** were also installed to aid our pro-active work and the team collaborated with other internal services to promote key Stop the Block messages and to support customers to overcome challenges.

34
sewer
interventions



Project legacy: a collaborative journey towards community support

In sharing this brochure, it offers a humble reflection on our ongoing journey of community engagement. This document captures the evolving nature of our work, emphasising that learning has been as much a part of our process as the outcomes we have achieved.

Centred in areas of high deprivation, the Water Resilient Communities project has aimed to deliver social value through innovative approaches, perseverance, and common goals. Yet, at every stage, we have been guided by the invaluable insights and experiences of the communities we serve. Our approach has been collaborative, not prescriptive, allowing us to adapt and evolve in ways that truly resonate with local needs.

The project principles have been fundamental. Rather than positioning ourselves as sole drivers of change, we have actively sought the involvement of local businesses and organisations, recognising that sustainable impact is a collective effort.

The brochure highlights diverse case studies, each highlighting both successes and learning moments. These stories are not just about the impact of our project but also about the power of working together, learning from each other, and continually evolving our strategies.

As we share this brochure, we do so with the understanding that our project is a part of a larger, ongoing journey. It is an invitation to other local entities to join us in this pursuit of community impact, carrying forward the spirit of collaboration and continuous learning that has been the cornerstone of our work. Growing together, we can create a better world for ourselves and future generations.



Growing together,
we can create
a better world for
ourselves and
future generations.

