

A photograph of a woman with brown hair tied back, wearing a dark navy blue zip-up jacket, smiling warmly at another person whose back is to the camera. The person in the foreground is wearing a white lab coat. They are standing in front of a blue wall. On the wall, there is a white sign with a toilet icon and Welsh text: 'MUN TRWSIO TAI SY'N GOLLWNG FICHDARDAL' and a blue button with the text '/cortref'. To the left, a blue sign with white text is partially visible. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting an outdoor or well-lit indoor setting.

SUPPORTING OUR CUSTOMERS

WORKING AT THE HEART OF OUR COMMUNITY

FOREWORD

PETER PERRY
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

At Welsh Water, our not for profit operating model enables us to put our customers first and we want to ensure that the services we provide are not only sustainable but also affordable to all our customers.

We know that there is an increasing number of households experiencing financial poverty, and de-spite the fall in inflation and energy prices over recent months, disposable incomes are still being squeezed. This is compounded by the relative higher levels of deprivation in the communities we serve here in Wales compared to the rest of the UK.

Arguably, this strategy 'Supporting Our Customers – Working at the heart of our community' which outlines our plan to support customers who need extra help, has never been more important.

It builds on the successes we have achieved to date. This includes supporting a record 130,000 vulnerable customers who struggle to pay their bills, which is one of the highest

levels of support for any water company in England and Wales. It also means continuing to do things differently as shown by our latest support scheme, Cymuned. This is the only scheme of its kind in the sector and is aimed at providing working household customers with temporary support to pay their water bills if their household bills exceed their income.

We cannot do this alone and this is why we work with over 300 local organisations (including Citizen's Advice, StepChange, Warm Wales, housing associations and foodbanks) to help identify customers who may need support. This collaboration is essential to helping us deliver this latest strategy.

As an anchor company here in Wales and provider of essential services, we believe in doing what's right and it is our duty to ensure that we remain embedded in our communities, so every customer gets the support they need.



FOREWORD

LESLEY GRIFFITHS MS
CABINET SECRETARY FOR CULTURE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

On behalf of the Welsh Government, I am pleased to see Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water reaffirming its commitment to social responsibility, by supporting the most vulnerable households in our society.

Dŵr Cymru's support includes crucial relief to those who need it most, by easing both the burden of financial stress and the pressure on overall finances for affected families.

This support is further complemented by adherence to the industry wide Priority Services Register (PSR) which offers additional services to customers who find themselves in vulnerable circumstances for many reasons including disability, sight or hearing impairment, chronic and serious illness and being of pensionable age. With the number of customers registered for the PSR having quadrupled over the past five years, I welcome the company's plans to continue to grow awareness of the availability of this service over the coming years.

Dŵr Cymru's work aligns with the Welsh Government's broader goals of promoting social justice. We all have a part to play and this strategy and associated actions highlight the importance of integrating social responsibility into business practices, thereby fostering more inclusive and supportive communities.

The Welsh Government is fully committed to social justice and equity. We recently published our National Equality Objectives and Long-Term Aim for 2024-28. These provide the foundation for our work to eliminate inequality, promote equality and foster good relations between people. They reflect our focus on creating a Wales which will provide fair access to services for all and deliver fairer outcomes for our diverse people and communities across Wales.

We also remain focused, particularly during the current economic uncertainties, on continuing to drive forward with our

commitment to tackle poverty by prioritising the needs of the poorest and protecting those most at risk of poverty and exclusion. Ensuring water affordability for vulnerable households is an important component of our approach to help secure better outcomes for everyone in Wales, and we are proud of the legislation and initiatives we have introduced to tackle poverty.



INTRODUCTION

We provide an essential public service used by over 3 million people, who rely on us to provide clean, safe drinking water and to take away their wastewater safely. Unfortunately, some of our customers will find it difficult to access these services and, in these situations, it is vital that we are able to respond quickly with the extra help they need.

We must ensure that we know our customer circumstances, and have this recorded in our systems, allowing us to be proactive in providing financial and non-financial support. Equally, our people must be able to recognise and respond to signs of vulnerability and not rely on customers telling us that they need assistance. Finally, we must work with customers and our partners to ensure that the services we provide are right for those who need our support.

We are pleased to present this new iteration of 'Supporting Our Customers'. It has been developed through consultation and discussion with customers, the organisations that represent

them, our teams that are working with customers every day, our Independent Challenge Group, and the Consumer Council for Water. These discussions have shown that our current approach to providing extra help has worked well, and that we should maintain our focus on data, making our services as accessible as possible, developing our partnerships and training our people to recognise and respond to the individual needs of our customers.

As the last few years have shown, we have responded quickly to a rapidly changing world. This experience will serve us well in delivering this next phase of our strategy for supporting customers who need extra help.

This strategy and commitments therein are based on the business plan that we submitted to Ofwat in October 2023 and then resubmitted in January 2024 (to reflect the latest version of the Natural Resources Wales National Environment Programme). At the time of writing this strategy, we have not received the draft determination of that plan from Ofwat. Therefore, we will assess the financability of these commitments following publication of the draft and final determinations later this year and reflect any changes that arise as a result of variations in the allowed revenues in the final strategy that we publish in June 2025.

OUR SPECIALIST
SUPPORT
TEAM DELIVER
SUPPORT TO
CUSTOMERS
WHO NEED
EXTRA HELP



HERE FOR YOU

OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

Much has been achieved since we launched our first strategy for supporting customers that need extra help (Supporting our customers – working at the heart of our community) in 2018. The number of customers registered for our priority services has increased to 169,000¹; we have increased financial assistance for low-income households from 101,000² to 145,000³; and we have built capacity into our schemes for them to expand to handle potential growth in unemployment.

Few people could have anticipated the events that would unfold in the early years of this decade, and which have impacted on the lives of our customers. These events – Covid-19 pandemic, disruption to energy supplies and trade because of the Ukraine war, rising inflation and interest rates – have challenged the established ways of assessing when and how to support customers. In particular, we started to see a new group of customers needing financial assistance for the first time. These customers are working

households, not eligible for means tested benefits, who are seeing the cost of housing, fuel, energy and food increase at a faster rate than their income and, as a result, are facing negative budgets. Working with the debt advice sector we introduced our Cymuned (community) Support Scheme, which gives these customers a 3-month charge-free period from their water and sewerage bill.

One of our commitments in 2018 was to make it easier for our customers to access the help that we provide and to that end we established our Specialist

Support team, with the aim of providing a single case managed service for customers who need extra help. This team of expert advisors can advise customers about financial and non-financial support, as well as signpost them to agencies that can help with matters unrelated to their water and wastewater service.

At the same time, we recognise that some customers will be reluctant or unable to contact us directly and therefore it is important that we make ourselves accessible in our communities. We have created our mobile Community Hub

1. March 2024
2. March 2018
3. March 2024

which visits towns across our operating area with our community advisors, often working with representatives from advice charities, promoting the support we offer and providing advice to individual customers about their bills. This team also trains representatives from our partner organisations to make applications on behalf of their clients via our online portal REACH.

Over the last five years, we have built up our network of partners and are now working with over 300 organisations, which include Welsh Government, local authorities, regional job centre

offices, debt advise charities and community groups. The strength of this network is the diversity of skills, knowledge and experience of the people involved, underpinned by a common mission to deliver better outcomes for the communities we serve.

One of the best examples of our partnerships in action are our Water Resilient Community projects. Since 2018 we have run projects in Rhondda Fach, Rhymney-Bargoed area, Rhyl and Newport and we are embarking on 2 further projects in Cardigan and Bangor. The principle of our Water

Resilient Communities is to understand the challenges of the communities we are working in, particularly in areas where we are carrying out work on our water or wastewater network and where there are high levels of deprivation. In these projects we work with customers, community leaders, business and other stakeholders to see how we can address some of those challenges. As well as being able to improve awareness and take up of our support schemes, we involve teams across our business to target water efficiency and private leaks, employment support,

education and waste network improvements. These projects are vitally important in building our relationships, and therefore trust, with communities.

We have made good progress against our 2018 priorities, however the time is right to reflect on the changes that have happened since then and how they impact on the needs and expectations of our customers, as well as the expectations of government, regulators and other stakeholders.

THE NEEDS OF OUR CUSTOMERS

There are many factors which will make it difficult for some of our customers to access our services, particularly during incidents. The needs that our customers have are not mutually exclusive as someone with a long-term health condition is likely to experience financial hardship and possibly social exclusion. At the same time, it is important to recognise that customer circumstances are not static and will change over time.



24%

24% of people in Wales live in poverty, more than the other UK nations and second only to London when looking at the regions. This is driven by higher proportions of working age adults not in work, people in low paid jobs and people claiming Universal Credit or legacy benefits.



13%

More than 1 in 10 people in Wales are in arrears on a bill.⁴



670,00

670,000 people in Wales are classified as disabled.⁵

4. Snapshot of poverty in winter 2024 – Bevan Foundation
5. Health, disability and provision of unpaid care in Wales (Census 2021) – Welsh Government
6. Together for mental health – Welsh Government
7. Digital inclusion in Wales – Auditor General for Wales (2023)
8. 2013 Schools Census
9. Older people in Wales: facts and figures – Age Cymru and Swansea University (September 2021)

As these statistics show, our customers are more likely than the average to find it difficult to access our services. It is important that we continue to build our understanding of individual customer circumstances, and of communities at large, and ensure that the services we provide meet the extra needs they may have.



1 in 6

1 in 6 people report experiencing a common mental health problem such as depression or anxiety.⁶



7%

The level of digital exclusion in Wales is higher than in the UK, with as many as 7% of the population, or 170,000 people, not using the internet.⁷



22.4%

22.4% of pupils at primary, middle, secondary and special schools have some form of special educational need.⁸



21%

21% of the total population are over 65, the highest proportion of all UK countries and by 2030 this is expected to increase to 33% of the population.⁹

CUSTOMER AND STAKEHOLDER INPUT

In developing this updated strategy, we have carried out customer research with Blue Marble to understand how the work we have done so far addresses the priorities of customers and to identify areas for improvement. The conclusions of this research were:

The conclusions of this research were:

Customers' vulnerabilities are highly complex. Many groups don't self-identify with this label, and this means there is a low likelihood that they will seek out support due to a perceived lack of need and belief that they are not eligible.

The economic climate is harsh. Most customers are at least 'managing' but it can be difficult and stressful to afford some of the key essentials. Many customers are already proactively balancing financial priorities to mitigate the impact of inflation.

Many customers do not interact with Welsh Water on a regular basis. Those that do find customer service teams to be helpful and the range of ways that people can get in touch positive. There are improvements that can be made to website navigation and incident communications and support.

There's low awareness of the extra help Welsh Water provides, and customers want us to promote more about the services and the benefit of them to customers.

The suggested improvements include: more use of intermediaries to raise awareness of support available; signposting in spaces where customers are likely to engage (community centres, online adverts), use of more inclusive language which doesn't alienate those who do not self-identify as needing extra help; clear communication about application and eligibility and the ease with which it can be done; and normalising the support available.

Similarly, we have engaged with our employees, stakeholders and partners to understand the impact of our work and what they see as the priorities over the medium term. This included a series of workshops and bilateral discussions with Welsh Government, our Independent Challenge Group, and partners that have worked with us on strategic projects

The main findings of this engagement were:

Overall, the consensus is that we do not need to make significant changes to our current strategy, however there are some improvement opportunities with our existing services.

The work that we do through our outreach teams is vital in ensuring that we reach customers who won't engage with us directly and we should continue to invest in this area.

Since we first launched our strategy in 2018, there is a better understanding of the complexity of customer needs, which often goes beyond our schemes, and needs more consideration in terms of how utility companies communicate with customers. Partner organisations can be a valuable resource in addressing this, particularly for those customers who do not declare that they need extra help.

A strong message coming out of the review sessions was that we need to do more to tailor our communications with different groups of priority service customers during incidents.

We have a good range of financial assistance schemes, and the addition of our Cymuned scheme is particularly welcome as it is supporting an under served, but growing, group of customers.

We have a proactive approach to marketing, and we make good use of different media and the opportunities for aligning with other support/ support agencies.

Finally, as we look to install smart meters from 2025, we need to give careful consideration to the impact on lower income households.

We have met separately with Senedd members to understand the concerns of their constituents and where we should focus our efforts. Our learning from these meetings was that our support was helpful and beneficial, and that we need to ensure that we proactively identify those customers who may need extra help but do not think to look to their water company for support.

THE EXPECTATION OF OUR REGULATORS

Our regulators place great importance on the work that water companies do to support customers who need extra help.

In its vulnerability guidance, Ofwat has defined five objectives for water companies:

- Provide a high standard of service and support
- Develop services that are inclusive by design
- Identify customers who need extra help
- Record their needs
- Develop vulnerability strategies

Ofwat has also defined minimum expectations of how these objectives are met. These expectations and details of how Welsh Water delivers against them are provided in Appendix 1.



OUR HELP

We understand that there are many reasons why customers may need extra help to access our services. It may be a long-standing health condition or a life event that creates a short-term change in their financial or personal circumstances.

We aim to respond to the different circumstances and needs through our Priority Services and Financial Assistance schemes:

PRIORITY SERVICES

- Priority contact for supply interruptions
- Alternative water supply during interruptions
- Accessible bills: large print; coloured background; Braille; CD/MP3; read bills over the phone; send bills to a friend or relative
- Home visits to discuss bills and payments
- Accessible contact: Text Relay Service; accessibility settings on our website to change the text, language and colour; Live Chat in our Specialist Support team for Priority Services and Financial Assistance queries; British Sign Video service on our website
- Nominee: appoint a friend, relative or carer to deal with account queries, payments and matters relating to our water and wastewater services
- Password scheme: protect our customers from bogus callers by setting up a password that our teams will always use when visiting or contacting.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

- Spread the cost of bills with payment plans
- Ability to return to unmeasured charges within two years of a meter being fitted
- Short term payment breaks
- Social tariffs: capped bills for low-income households (HelpU) and metered households with large families or someone with a medical condition that requires significant use of extra water (WaterSure Wales)
- Support schemes: Customer Assistance Fund for customers in severe financial hardship to clear arrears and get on top of their payments; Water Direct for customers that pay their charges and outstanding arrears through their benefits; Cymuned Support Fund for working households with negative budgets which provides a 3 month 'charge free' period
- Advice: Benefit Checker (Turn2Us); Water efficiency audits.

OUR COMMITMENTS

Maintain the company contribution of £14m per annum to fund financial assistance schemes

Grow awareness of our financial and non-financial support

Annual Water Resilient Community projects

All colleagues trained on how to recognise and respond to the signs of vulnerability

Maintain the ISO 22458:2022 consumer vulnerability standard

Host an annual event to share best practice with partners, stakeholders and other utility companies

Develop our insight models, with external data sources, to identify the needs of customers and develop strategies to target our marketing and promotion activities in under served areas.

Establish a vulnerable customer panel to test satisfaction with our current services and new services that we develop.

Annual board review of our progress against the commitments in our Vulnerability Strategy.





WHAT WE WILL MONITOR

Number of customers signed up to our Priority Service Register.

Awareness of our priority services and financial assistance scheme

Attempted and actual number of priority service customers contacted every two years to confirm their ongoing requirement

Colleague competency

Number of customers receiving financial assistance

Satisfaction of customers registered for priority services

Geographical penetration of our financial assistance schemes against Welsh Indices of Deprivation and Indices of Deprivation

Satisfaction of customers receiving financial assistance

ISO 22458:2022 accreditation

OUR STRATEGY

DATA

As a water company, we hold personal data so that we can provide our customers with the services that they require. Other utilities, local authorities, health authorities and social landlords hold similar information and by working effectively with them, as well as turning our internal sources of information into meaningful insight, we can fully understand the needs of our customers and ensure that they are able to access the extra help they need quickly and with minimal effort.

We will work with our partners to identify opportunities for data sharing that allow us to proactively identify customers that need financial and non-financial extra help. We will also use internal and external data sources to monitor the impact of our vulnerability strategy, as well as understand how satisfied customers are with these services.



What we do now:

-
- ✓ Share priority services information with the energy distribution network operators across our region (National Grid & Scottish Power), Welsh Government (through their priority services data sharing portal), Department of Work and Pensions (benefit matching to confirm social tariff eligibility), NHS Trusts and Kidney Care UK (identifying dialysis patients for priority services and social tariff eligibility)
-
- ✓ Use the following customer feedback and insight to monitor satisfaction with our services and identify opportunities for improvement:
 - In-house and external customer surveys
 - Speech analytics software
 - Root-cause analysis of written and non-written complaints and chase contacts
 - Customer journey performance measures
-
- ✓ Use external data sources, such as Welsh Indices of Multiple Deprivation, to identify communities where the need for financial assistances is greatest and monitor take up of our schemes
-
- ✓ Undertake half yearly reviews of arrears levels to understand the impact of our financial assistance schemes on customer ability to pay
-
- ✓ Capture within our GIS platform water reliant non-household premises (such as hospitals, schools and care homes) which provide services to customers that need extra help to ensure that our operational teams can prioritise support during incidents. As part of this, we have partnered with Care Inspectorate Wales to receive monthly information about care homes, including the number of residents.

What we will do:

-
- ✓ Continue with our current data sharing and data insight activities
-
- ✓ Explore new data sharing opportunities, including the expansion of data sharing with the energy sector and the introduction of financial data sharing
-
- ✓ Introduce new metrics to help to monitor effectiveness and progress of this vulnerability strategy
-
- ✓ Expand external data sources to improve our understanding of the extra help needs of under-represented customer groups and how we need to adapt our current services to accommodate them
-
- ✓ As we roll out smart meters from 2025, provide customers billed on unmeasured charges information about their water usage to help them understand if it would be financially advantageous to be on a meter.

OUR STRATEGY

ACCESSIBLE SUPPORT DESIGNED AROUND CUSTOMER NEED

We have a long-established Priority Services Register which ensures that customers that need extra help are able to access our services in a way that meets their particular circumstances. This ranges from accessible communications to bottle water deliveries during incidents. Equally, we support households with a variety of financial assistance measures: social tariffs, debt support schemes, flexible payment plans and forbearance schemes, metering and water efficiency advice.

We will ensure that our services are designed around the needs of our customers and make sure that they evolve as those needs change or as we learn more about our customers. We will ensure that we are accessible to our customers, providing communications and communication channels that take account of the barriers that some of them face, such as not speaking English or Welsh as a first language, learning disabilities, neurodiverse condition, and sight and hearing impairments.

We know that some of our non-household customers have water reliant premises because of the services they provide to customers who need extra help. We will ensure that our incident response teams recognise the criticality of our services to these customers and prioritise their response accordingly.

What we do now:

- ✔ Support 169,000 (11.5%) households with our priority services
- ✔ Support 145,000 with a financial assistance scheme
- ✔ Work with our network of partners to understand how customer needs are changing over time. Through these discussions we identified the need for a new assistance scheme to support working households, which led to the introduction of our Cymuned Scheme (see case study)
- ✔ Provide flexible payment arrangements for micro businesses
- ✔ Provide alternative formats (Braille, large print, coloured paper and audio) for bills and written communications and ensure that all bills and non-reactive communications are in Easy Read format
- ✔ Provide a case managed service for customers that require extra help through our Specialist Support team, bringing together our financial and non-financial assistance
- ✔ Provide a language line translation service in 240 languages within our contact centre. More recently this has been enhanced by the introduction of a sign language video service
- ✔ Provide an accessibility service on our website, which includes options to amend the format and background of content, as well as translation services in 53 languages
- ✔ Dedicated marketing campaign 'Here for you' which uses a range of media and aligns our messaging with other financial assistance (such as free school meals, pension credits etc.).

What we will do:

-
- ✓ Continue with our current range of extra help services
-
- ✓ Minimise the impact of future bill rises on low-income households by using our financial surpluses to finance growth of our financial assistance schemes.
-
- ✓ Undertake periodic reviews of our range of financial and non-financial extra help to determine development of future services
-
- ✓ Undertake annual customer research with customers receiving extra help to identify areas for improvement
-
- ✓ Work with water reliant non-household customers to identify opportunities to improve the support we provide during incidents
-
- ✓ Amend our leakage code of practice to take account of the needs of micro-businesses
-
- ✓ Use the feedback from the newly introduced customer research into incidents across the sector to improve our communication with customers
-
- ✓ Introduce digital customer journey audits to improve the accessibility of our digital services and the content on our website
-
- ✓ Introduce online application for WaterSure Wales
-
- ✓ Improve and expand our third-party referral process for support for customers in debt
-
- ✓ Use new smart metering capability to provide more frequent and more timely consumption information to customers that require this service
-
- ✓ Introduce accessibility monitoring for the website
-
- ✓ Introduce 'Plain Numbers' for customer bills
-
- ✓ Address the key findings in relation to accessibility of services coming out of the Blue Marble customer research.

OUR STRATEGY

TRAINING & AWARENESS

We have teams working across our operating area, speaking to customers daily. Along with our supply chain and the many partners that we work with, this provides us with a unique opportunity to raise awareness of the support we can offer, as well as respond to the individual circumstances facing a customer.

We will seek to maximise the impact of our people and partners through targeted training that helps them build empathy with customers, allowing them to assess what extra help is needed and ensure that this help is delivered as quickly as possible. We will ensure that our people understand the full scope of our services that we offer and the routes to accessing them. We will also provide them with the capability and confidence to understand the small changes that can be made when a different approach is needed in order to address the specific extra needs of a customer.

What we do now:

- ✔ Monthly Teach Talks for customer facing teams from partner organisations representing specific consumer needs or circumstances (examples include Age Cymru, MIND, Samaritans, Parkinsons UK). These sessions bring to life the needs of specific customers, the challenges they face and advice on how we can best provide support
- ✔ Training sessions on our priority services and financial assistance schemes for our partner network, allowing them to directly refer clients to us (via our online portal REACH)
- ✔ Vulnerability training modules, accredited by Communications Access UK, within our induction programme and refresher training for all frontline employees
- ✔ Prompt cards for meter readers to direct customers to our extra help services.

What we will do:

- ✔ Continue with current training and awareness activities
- ✔ Introduce annual training for all employees and those in our supply chain on how to recognise the signs that a customer needs extra help and how to respond
- ✔ Incorporate lessons from research carried out by CCW and Ofwat into incidents in other companies into our incident response processes
- ✔ Develop online training for our partner network
- ✔ Expand the range of internal communications 'collateral' promoting our services across all field based and support teams
- ✔ Address the key findings relating to training and awareness coming out of the Blue Marble customer research.



OUR STRATEGY

COMMUNITY AND PARTNERSHIPS

We have a long tradition of working with other organisations to deliver better outcomes for our communities.

We have seen on many occasions that we can achieve far more when we collaborate with our customers and the agencies that speak on their behalf. These agencies provide valuable insight into our customers' lives and the impact that our services are having. More importantly, they are trusted by our customers and will often be the first point of contact when they are in a difficult situation. We are now working with over 300 organisations across our operating area to raise awareness of the extra help we provide, as well as responding to individual customer needs.

We will continue to build meaningful partnerships with organisations that represent the diverse needs of our customers. We will work with them to maximise the reach of our services, as well as get insight into the impact of those services and identify opportunities for improvement. We will maximise our community presence to raise awareness of our services, provide outplacement support and address wider local needs.

What we do now:

- ✔ Community based promotions team providing advice on Priority Services and Financial Assistance Schemes, often working with other advice agencies and utilities companies to ensure that customers receive a more complete package of support
- ✔ Hold debt advice clinics and 1-2-1 customer appointments in community locations
- ✔ Host an annual event to share best practice with our partners, other water companies and utility companies, and obtain feedback on our current activities and plans
- ✔ Develop our Water Resilient Community projects which aim to add social value through collaboration with members of the communities and the organisations that work within them. In forming these partnerships, we are able to find solutions to some of the key challenges the communities face and work together to drive long lasting change
- ✔ Actively learn from our peers within and outside of the water sector through membership of groups such as WaterUK Customer Service Network, The Collaboration Network, Welsh Government's Income Maximisation Task and Finish Group and Responsible Lending Forum, Resource West (regional partnership involving Wessex Water, Pennon Water, Wales and West Utilities, National Grid)
- ✔ Provide grants up to £5,000 to community run projects which promote health, wellbeing and environmental objectives. We commit £100,000 each year to funding these community projects.

What we will do:

- ✔ Continue with current community and partnership activities
- ✔ Develop community partnership 'clusters' to help target support in areas
- ✔ Create more Water Resilient Community projects
- ✔ Establish a framework for collating feedback from partners to help drive improvements in our priority services and financial assistance schemes
- ✔ Address the key findings relating to communities and partnerships coming out of the Blue Marble customer research.



DATA SHARING

At times, some customers need a little extra help, so we have a Priority Services Register (PSR) for the most vulnerable people in our communities.

Aimed at people with additional needs and disabilities, have young children, are ill or elderly, the scheme can help with alternative water supply if supplies are interrupted, alternative ways of getting information and reassurance against bogus callers. In order to improve the number of customers on our PSR we have entered into data share agreements with third parties such as National Grid, Scottish Power Energy Networks and Kidney Care Wales to share PSR customer data. These now add over 1,000 customers who need extra help a month to the register and impact of this is our Priority Service Register has increased from 27,000 to over 169,000 customers. We also outwardly share data to Welsh Government's JIGSO platform which identifies 'at risk' properties and shares with the resilience community and emergency services across Wales to prioritise resources to those that need it most.

CASE STUDIES

WATER RESILIENT COMMUNITIES PROJECT

Our Water Resilient Community Project in Newport brought partners and people together to create noticeable impact for the community. Focusing in areas of high deprivation, 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. Working with other trusted organisations such as Newport City Homes, Business in the Community, and the Eden Gate Centre Newport enabled us to support more of the community. The project culminated in a family event. Held during the autumn half-term, it provided an opportunity 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. The project leaves a legacy, with 333 new customers added to our priority services register, 326 new payment plans implemented, 84 hours of classroom teaching, 34 sewer interventions, 196 leaky loos repaired and two jobseekers supported into employment.

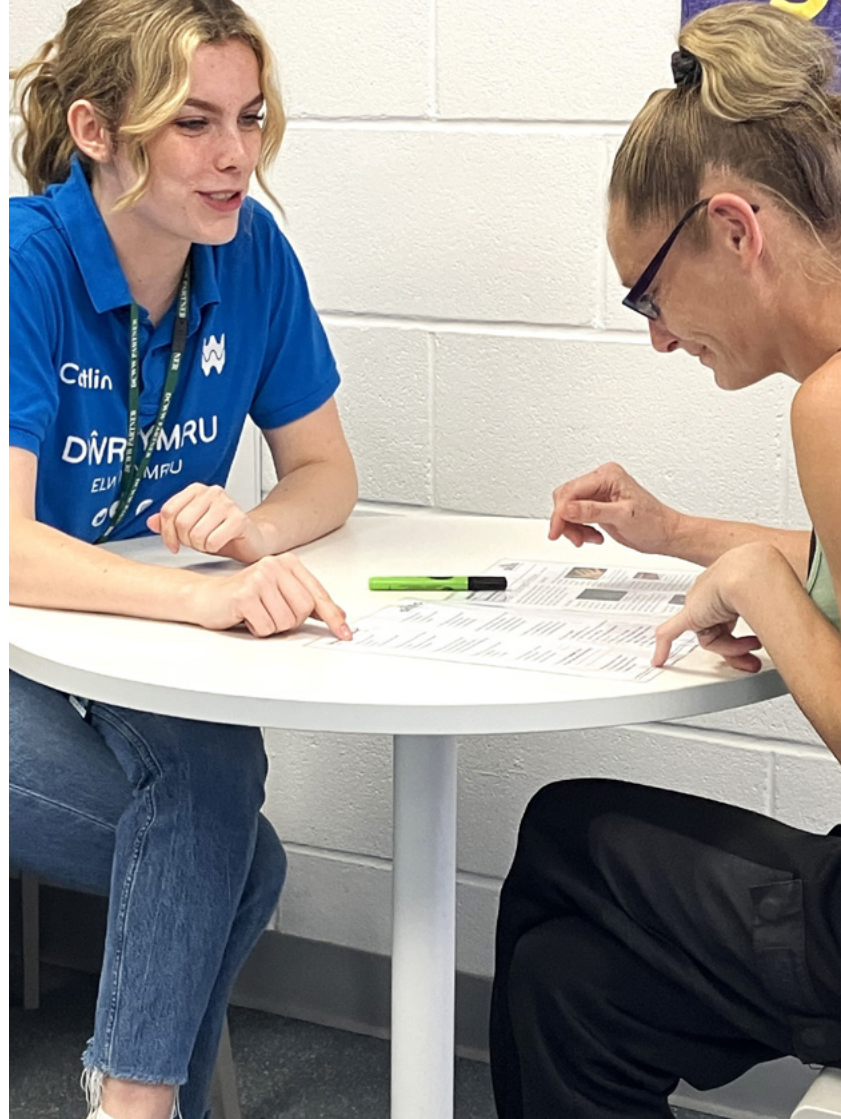


SPECIALIST SUPPORT TEAM

A team of twenty agents form our highly trained Specialist Support Team.

Our people understand that vulnerability comes in many forms and use best practice when dealing with vulnerable customers. Customers who may need extra help are warm transferred through to the team, who deal with 50,000 contacts a year and achieve a customer satisfaction rating of 9.6 out of 10. The team support customers with social tariff, debt support and priority service applications and work closely with partner organisations such as Mind, Citizen's Advice and StepChange to help customers access additional support.

Jamie, Money Advice Team Manager from Trivallis, a social housing provider in Rhondda Cynon Taf, got in touch after a vulnerable tenant received a letter with over £2,500 worth of arrears. Jamie said: *"I phoned Welsh water and spoke to Ashleigh from the Specialist Support Team; she immediately suggested getting the tenant on the HelpU tariff, to reduce his payments going forward. We managed to set up a manageable direct debit with the tenant and he has also been put forward for Welsh Water's Customer Assistance Fund. The tenant is over the moon with this as it is a big worry off his mind."*



TEACH TALKS

Every month a Teach Talk hosted by external partners (such as Age Cymru, MIND, Samaritans, Scope, Credit Union etc.) is delivered to the team which brings a customer perspective, helping colleagues to relate and adapt their approach to suit each customer's individual needs.

To date we have hosted 42 teach talks. These sessions are recorded and promoted through internal communication channels to ensure that colleagues across the whole business are able to view and learn from our partners.

A recent Teach Talk highlighted the challenges that deaf customers face when interacting with businesses and the discussion led to our introduction of a new SignVideo British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation service.

Ben Culleton from the British Deaf Association said:

"It's fantastic to see Welsh Water supporting customers with the British Sign Language interpretation service. Customers who are deaf and hard of hearing often find it difficult to deal with businesses through their normal channels so it is great to see this being made to support those who use BSL"

APPENDIX 2: OUR PARTNERS

Action in Caerau & Ely • Action for Children • Action for Elders • Action on Hearing Loss • Adferiad Mental Health • Adra Housing Association • Advice Mid Wales • Advocacy Support Cymru • Age Cymru Dyfed • Age Cymru Gwent • Age Cymru West Glamorgan • Age Cymru Powys • Age Cymru Gwynedd a Mon • Age Connect Wales • Age Connect Cardiff • Age Connect Morgannwg • Age Connect Torfaen • Age Connect Barry • Age Connect Aberdare • Age Connect Newport • Age Connect Rhondda Cynnon Taf • Age Connect Merthyr Tydfil • Age Connect Flintshire • All Wales People First • Alzheimer's Society • Arc Communities • Arbed • ASD Rainbow Charity • Advocacy Services North East Wales • Auriga Services • Autism Directory • Barcud • Bargoed Community Hub • Barnardos • Barod • Basecamp • Blaenau Gwent Council • Blind Veterans • Bridgend County Council • British Legion • Bro Myrddin Housing Association • Bron Afon Housing Association • British Deaf Association • British Lung Foundation • British Red Cross • Business in the Community • Citizens Advice Bureau • Citizens Advice Bureau Gwent • Citizens Advice Bureau Caerphilly • Citizens Advice Bureau Rhondda Cynon Taf • Citizens Advice Bureau Flintshire • Citizens Advice Bureau Bridgend • Citizens Advice Bureau Cardiff • Citizens Advice Bureau Ceredigion • Citizens Advice Bureau Conwy • Citizens Advice Bureau Carmarthenshire • Citizens Advice Bureau Denbighshire • Citizens Advice Bureau Gwynedd • Citizens Advice Bureau Monmouthshire • Citizens Advice Bureau Neath Port Talbot • Citizens Advice Bureau Pembrokeshire • Citizens Advice Bureau Powys • Citizens Advice Bureau Torfaen • Citizens Advice Bureau Vale of Glamorgan • Citizens Advice Bureau Wrexham • Cadwyn Housing Association • Caerphilly Council • CAIS Mental Health • Cancer UK • Canolfan Felinfach • Cardiff Council • Cardiff Community Housing Association • Care and Repair Wales • Carers Trust • Carers Wales • Carmarthen Council • Cartefi Housing • Celtic Linc • Ceredigion Council • Charis Grants • Chinese Elderly Association • Christians Against Poverty • Church Army • Clean Slate • Clwyd Alyn Housing • Coal Industry Social Welfare • Coastal Housing • Communities First Cardiff • Communities First Carmarthenshire • Communities First Denbighshire • Communities First Neath Port Talbot • Communities First Newport • Communities First Powys • Communities First Rhondda Cynon Taf • Communities First Swansea • Communities First Ynys Mon • Communities for Work • Community Money Advice • Community Support • Community Transport • Community and Voluntary Support • Conwy Council • Corner Stone Opportunities • Credit Union Vale of Glamorgan • Credit Union Cardiff • Cynon Taf Housing • Deaf Blind Society • Dementia • Denbigh Community Navigators • Denbigh Youth People Positive Pathway • Derwen Cymru • Dewis Wales • Diabetes UK • Digatref • Disability Can Do • Disabled Living • Diverse Cymru • Dref Werdd • Department of Working Pensions • Dyfed Powys Police • Energy Saving Trust • Families First • Fire Service • Flintshire Council • Flying Start • Ammanford Foodbank • Anglesey Foodbank • Arfon Foodbank • Bargoed Foodbank • Barmouth Foodbank • Blaenau Gwent Foodbank • Brecon Foodbank • Caerphilly Foodbank • Flintshire Foodbank • Hay on Wye Foodbank • Llanelli Foodbank • Merthyr Cynon Foodbank • Pontardawe Foodbank • Pontypridd Foodbank • Taff Ely Foodbank • Rhondda Foodbank • Rhyl Foodbank • Rhymney Valley Foodbank •

Swansea Foodbank • Ystradgynlais Foodbank • First Choice Housing • Gwent Association Of Voluntary Organisations • Gellideg Foundation • GISDA • Gorwel • Groundworks • Grow Cymru • Grwp Cynefin • Gwalia Housing • Gwynedd Council • Gwynedd Housing • Hafal Housing • Hafal Cymru • Hafod Housing • Headway Charity • Hijinx • Heat and Save • HSBC • Home Start • Hope for Justice • Hope4U • Institute for the Blind • Abergavenny Job Centre • Abertillery Job Centre • Ammanford Job Centre • Aberdare Job Centre • Aberystwyth Job Centre • Ammanford Job Centre • Bargoed Job Centre • Blackwood Job Centre • Blaenau Gwent Job Centre • Barry Job Centre • Brecon Job Centre • Bridgend Job Centre • Caerphilly Job Centre • Cardigan Job Centre • Carmarthen Job Centre • Chepstow Job Centre • Ebbw Vale Job Centre • Gorseinon Job Centre • Flintshire Job Centre • Haverfordwest Job Centre • Hereford Job Centre • Lampeter Job Centre • Llandrindod Wells Job Centre • Llandysul Job Centre • Llanelli Job Centre • Llantrisant Job Centre • Machynlleth Job Centre • Maesteg Job Centre • Merthyr Tydfil Job Centre • Milford Haven Job Centre • Morriston Job Centre • Neath Job Centre • Newport Job Centre • Newtown Job Centre • Pembroke Dock Job Centre • Pontypool Job Centre • Pontypridd Job Centre • Port Talbot Job Centre • Porth Job Centre • Porthcawl Job Centre • Rhyl Job Centre • Shotton Job Centre • Swansea Job Centre • Tonypanyd Job Centre • Treorchy Job Centre • Welshpool Job Centre • Ystradgynlais Job Centre • Kaleidoscope • Kim Inspire • Kidney Care • Kidney Wales • Life Ways • Linc Cymru • Llamau • Macmillan Cancer Trust • Macular Society • Mantell Gwynedd • Meadow Prospect Homes • Moesincla Eye • Melin Homes • Mental Health and Money Advice • Menter Cwm Gwendraeth • Menter Dinefwr • Merthyr Housing • Merthyr Tydfil Council • Merthyr Valleys Homes • Men's Shed • MIND • Money and Pensions • Moneyline Cymru • Moneyline Valley Homes • Monmouthshire Council • Monmouthshire Housing • Money Saviour • Mothers Matters • MS Society • Nacro • National Energy Action • Neath Port Talbot Credit Union • NEWCIS Carers • Newport Council • Newport MP Office • Newport City Homes • Newydd Housing • NHS Brynmawr Medical Practice • North Wales Housing • OASIS • Opus • Ovo • Parkinsons UK • Pembrokeshire Care Society • Pembrokeshire Council • Pembrokeshire Housing • Pennysmart • Plattform • Pobl • Powys Council • Plant a Chefnogi Teuluoedd • Principality Building Society • Reach Housing Support • Reed • Remploy • Rhondda Cynon Taff Council • Rhondda Housing • Riverside Advice • Royal National Institute of Blind • Royal Association for Deaf People • Royal Voluntary Service • Sanctuary Trust • Salad Money • Salvation Army • Scope • Serco • Severn Wye • Shelter Cymru • Speak Easy Cymru • Sight Cymru • Sight Life Wales • Sign Sight Sound • Smart Money Cymru • Smart Services SSE • St Giles Trust • Stroke Association • Stori Cymru • Supporting People Gwent • Swansea Council • StepChange • Swansea Young Families • Tai Calon Housing • Tai Clwyd • Tai Eryri • Tai Tarian • Tenovus • Tros Gynnal Plant Cymru • Torfaen Council • Trivallis Housing Association • Trussell Trust • United Welsh Housing • Vale of Glamorgan Council • Valedas • Valleys Kids • Valleys To Coast Housing • Wales Co-operative • Wales Council for Deaf People • Wales Council for Voluntary Action • Wales Illegal Money Lending Unit • Wales and West Housing • Welsh Community for Deaf People • Wallich • Warm Wales • Welsh Women's Aid • Women's Aid

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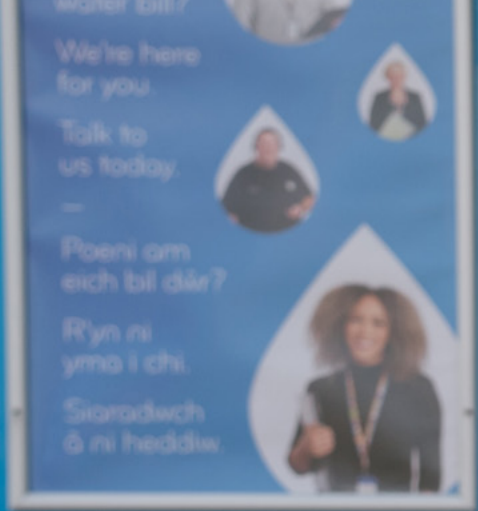
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