

Extra help when you need it most



June 2025

Our strategy for providing services to customers who need extra help

June 2025

About us and our region

We provide a great water and wastewater service for a stronger, greener and healthier North West. We provide 1.8 billion litres of water a day to more than 7 million customers and 200,000 businesses across our region, as well as treating wastewater and protecting the environment.

Keeping water flowing to customers' taps and maintaining a reliable wastewater service relies on a lot of work behind the scenes, involving:

- hundreds of reservoirs, treatment works and pumping stations;
- thousands of kilometres of water pipes and sewers; and
- a workforce made up of 5,000 people.

The North West is somewhere we are all proud to call home. It is the third most populated region in the UK, with a rich diversity from rural towns to inner-city communities, and home to Europe's largest Chinese community and Britain's oldest African community.

We serve customers with different backgrounds, needs, personalities, life experiences and beliefs. Across our five counties, one in four people will experience mental health challenges, one in five will experience sight loss and one in four will experience disability. As a provider of a vital service, it is important that we understand and consider the needs of all our customers and support people who need extra help.

This document outlines our strategy for customers who may need extra help, through our Priority Services scheme.



Over 1 million people in the North West are aged 70 or over

Census 2021



47% of the most deprived neighbourhoods in England are in the North West

Indices of multiple deprivation, 2019



89% of the North West population live in towns and cities

ONS 2021

Developing our strategy

When we were developing our vulnerability strategy, we worked with customers and key stakeholders from across our region to make sure our approach was inclusive and informed.

Through a series of consultations, workshops and online feedback forums, we gathered valuable insights into the personal experiences, challenges and expectations of people who are vulnerable. This process allowed us to come up with a strategy that reflects the diverse needs of our communities. By placing stakeholder voices at the heart of our planning, we've laid the groundwork for a more responsive and resilient approach to supporting vulnerable customers.

As well as working with our partners, challenge groups and customers to develop our services, we launched our draft strategy at our 2024 vulnerability summit in Blackpool. Over 100 stakeholders from different organisations, charities and the utilities sector attended the summit, with a focus on providing extra help to those who need it most. The day was filled with workshops and interactive sessions, focusing on responding to incidents and providing support, and gave us even more valuable feedback.

Challenge groups and partnerships		
YourVoice panel	Collaboration Network	Utilities Together
The independent challenge group is made up of industry leaders from across the North West. The group's affordability and vulnerability subpanel comes together with members who represent all areas of vulnerability.	Collaboration Network is an independent collaboration group with members from different sectors across the UK. The group's members work together towards raising standards of customer support in their own sector.	Based in the North West, Utilities Together is made up of representatives from the utility sector. The group focuses on vulnerability, with its members sharing best practice and knowledge, and working together on projects to support customers.

Customer feedback		
Online strategy feedback	Rant and Rave	Customer research
Our strategy feedback form is available on our website. Customers can use this form to provide feedback on our strategy and individual services.	Customer satisfaction scores and feedback comments help us identify areas where we need to improve.	Our customer research programme is designed to be inclusive so that customers with vulnerabilities are heard, whether this is through tailored projects or wider research.



Priority Services:

Extra help when you need it most

We are proud of our teams and the service they provide to customers every day. Our Priority Services scheme provides extra services for free to support people in times of need. This help is available whatever the situation, from coping with an unexpected loss of water supply, to changing payment arrangements or bank account details.

We understand that customers have different needs and that many customers also have more than one need, so the service we offer isn't 'one size fits all'.

We consider our Priority Services customers when planning when to do work that will involve turning their water off.

Our Priority Services scheme offers the following benefits.

- We have a dedicated team of trained employees on hand to help you.
- You can use our nominee scheme, which allows you to choose a carer, family member or friend to speak to us on your behalf.
- We can send your bills in Braille or large print, or on coloured paper. We can also talk you through your bill to help you understand what you are paying for.
- Our password scheme helps to protect you from bogus callers (people who pretend to be from United Utilities to gain access to your home).
- Our 'knock and wait' service means we give you extra time to answer the door when we visit.
- We offer translation services so we can communicate with you in other languages.
- You can use the Recite Me accessibility service on our website. Recite Me allows you to view the web pages in your chosen language, specialised colours or fonts, and includes speech translation.
- We will give you notice if we need to turn your water supply off for planned maintenance work.
- We will provide an alternative water supply if your water will be off for a long time.
- We will deliver bottled water to you within six hours of your water being turned off if you are one of our most vulnerable customers.
- We can help with reading your water meter. We can also move it to a place that is easier for you to read if this is necessary.

Our dedicated Priority Services team provides expert support for vulnerable customers to make sure help is always available in different ways, including a dedicated priority phone line. The 75 members of the team are specifically trained to identify people who would benefit from extra help, and provide a caring, attentive and accessible service.

Our scheme is designed to support people who:

- are blind or partially sighted;
- have a chronic (long-term) or serious illness;
- have a condition that affects their development;
- have dementia;
- rely on dialysis, feeding pumps or automated medication;
- are having financial difficulties;
- are deaf or hard of hearing, or have speech difficulties;
- have a mental health condition;
- are experiencing temporary life changes (including people who are going through a divorce or are grieving after the death of a loved one);
- are recovering after leaving hospital;
- have restricted movement or mobility issues that make it difficult for them to answer the door; or
- may struggle to communicate because their first language isn't English.

We also support families with children who are aged five or under. Our friendly employees are on hand to provide extra help for any customer who needs it.

Extra help when you need it most

We are committed to delivering excellent customer service. We have built this strategy around making sure we are affordable, attentive and accessible.

Often, people don't see themselves as vulnerable, but most of us could benefit from a bit of extra help or support at some stage in our lives. This could be due to age, ill health, disability, mental health problems, financial worries, language barriers or an event in our lives such as becoming a parent or going through a divorce.

Help and support may be needed for a short period of time or for longer and varies from person to person. This is why it is important to us that the services we offer are designed to respond to individual needs and circumstances whenever possible.

When we were developing our support services, we worked with recognised organisations, including:

- Age UK;
- StepChange;
- Citizens Advice;
- Guts UK;
- Kidney Care;
- Mencap;
- Accrington blind society; and
- Warrington Disability Partnership;

who have all helped us put in place the extra help, measures and support that customers can benefit from.

Our Priority Services scheme recognises that there are different reasons why people may find themselves in vulnerable circumstances and aims to provide targeted help and support to the right customers at the right time. An important step in achieving this is increasing customer engagement and the number of people who register for the scheme.

We use a tiered approach when providing support. This looks at different levels of need to make sure we help our most vulnerable customers first and that different groups of customers can access the extra help they need in a way which is suitable for their circumstances.



Increasing our ability to deliver extra support

Our teams are trained to understand the needs of customers and identify people who may need a bit of extra help. Our partnerships with organisations such as Samaritans, Dementia UK and Mind give our teams extra skills which help them feel more confident dealing with different situations and promoting our values.

We know that our employees play a crucial role in supporting our vulnerable customers. To make sure they can provide the best possible service, we offer full training and support focused on vulnerability awareness.

Priority Services training

Our Priority Services employees receive training that covers all parts of the Priority Services scheme. This training is made up of a number of modules that are delivered by a range of service providers, including Mind and Samaritans. This training makes sure that our employees are fully prepared to help our most vulnerable customers, with compassion and expertise.

Vulnerability awareness for contact centre teams

All new members of our contact centre teams receive training on how to recognise, during calls, people who may be vulnerable. This training includes an overview of the Priority Services scheme and practical guidance on identifying and meet the needs of vulnerable customers.

Suicide-awareness training

We have improved our suicide-awareness training for our Priority Services employees. This training is vital in giving our team the skills to recognise and respond to signs of distress, making sure vulnerable customers get the support they need.

Partner-delivered awareness sessions

We work with our partners, including Kidney Care UK, STAMMA and Warrington Disability Partnership, to deliver specialised awareness sessions to make sure our employees have the latest knowledge and best practice. By investing in thorough training and support for our employees, we make sure that they are well-prepared to provide compassionate and effective help to our vulnerable customers. We also know that learning is a continuous process, so we provide coaching and training for our teams throughout the year.



Building our capabilities to deliver extra support

Becoming Dementia Friends

We understand that living with dementia can be frightening and confusing – not just for those diagnosed, but also for their families and carers. That’s why we’re committed to making sure our teams have the knowledge and understanding needed to offer meaningful support.

All members of our Priority Services team take part in the Alzheimer’s Society Dementia Friends awareness training, which helps them:

- understand the challenges faced by people living with dementia;
- communicate more effectively and compassionately; and
- recognise signs that someone may need additional support.

By becoming Dementia Friends, our teams are better prepared to provide a respectful, informed, and person-centred service to those who need it most.

This commitment to continuous learning and improvement is an important part of our Priority Services strategy.

Specialist support for the people who need it most

Training our customer-facing employees remains a vital part of how we develop and deliver our services. However, we recognise that some customers need more specialised support to meet their needs.

To address this, we’ve improved our Priority Services team by introducing two experienced social workers. These professionals bring knowledge and understanding, and can:

- hold in-depth, compassionate conversations with customers;
- attend site visits to better understand personal circumstances; and
- carry out referrals and assessments to connect individuals with the right support.

We have done this to make sure we’re not only listening to our customers, but also taking meaningful, tailored action to provide support to the people who need it most.



Understanding customers across our region

Our teams are trained to understand the needs of customers and identify people who may need a bit of extra help. Our partnerships with organisations such as the Samaritans, Dementia UK and Mind give our teams extra skills which help them feel more confident dealing with different situations and promoting our values.

<p>47% of the most deprived areas are in the North West.</p> <p>Indices of multiple deprivation, September 2019</p>	<p>24% of people in the North West claim disability benefits.</p> <p>House of Commons library research, July 2022</p>	<p>25.7% of people in the North West say they have mental health conditions, such as anxiety.</p> <p>Health Profile for England, 2021</p>
<p>The top four local authorities with the highest percentage of people who report having a disability which limits their day-to-day activities are in the North West.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowsley (13%) • Liverpool (12.7%) • Blackpool (12%) • Manchester (11.4%) <p>Health Equity, 2023</p>	 <p>1.3 million people aged 70 or over live in the North West.</p> <p>Office for National Statistics, 2022</p>	<p>19.4% of the population in the North West are disabled (as defined by the Equality Act). This is more than the national average (17.7%). The North West has the UK's second highest percentage of people with a disability region.</p> <p>Office for National Statistics Census, 2021</p>
<p>Over 540,000 customers are registered for extra help through our Priority Services scheme.</p> <p>United Utilities data, March 2024</p>	<p>6.7% of people in the North West do not speak English as a first language. In Manchester, this figure is 18.3%.</p> <p>Office for National Statistics Census, 2021</p>	<p>740,000 adults aged 16 and over have never worked.</p> <p>Office for National Statistics Census, 2021</p>

Understanding our customers, county by county

We believe that understanding our customers is key to delivering the services they need. That's why we've introduced a **county-based operating model**, allowing us to work more closely with communities across the North West.

This approach allows us to:

- build stronger relationships in each county;
- understand the unique needs and challenges of local communities;
- communicate more effectively about ongoing projects and improvements; and
- tailor our support and services to meet local expectations.

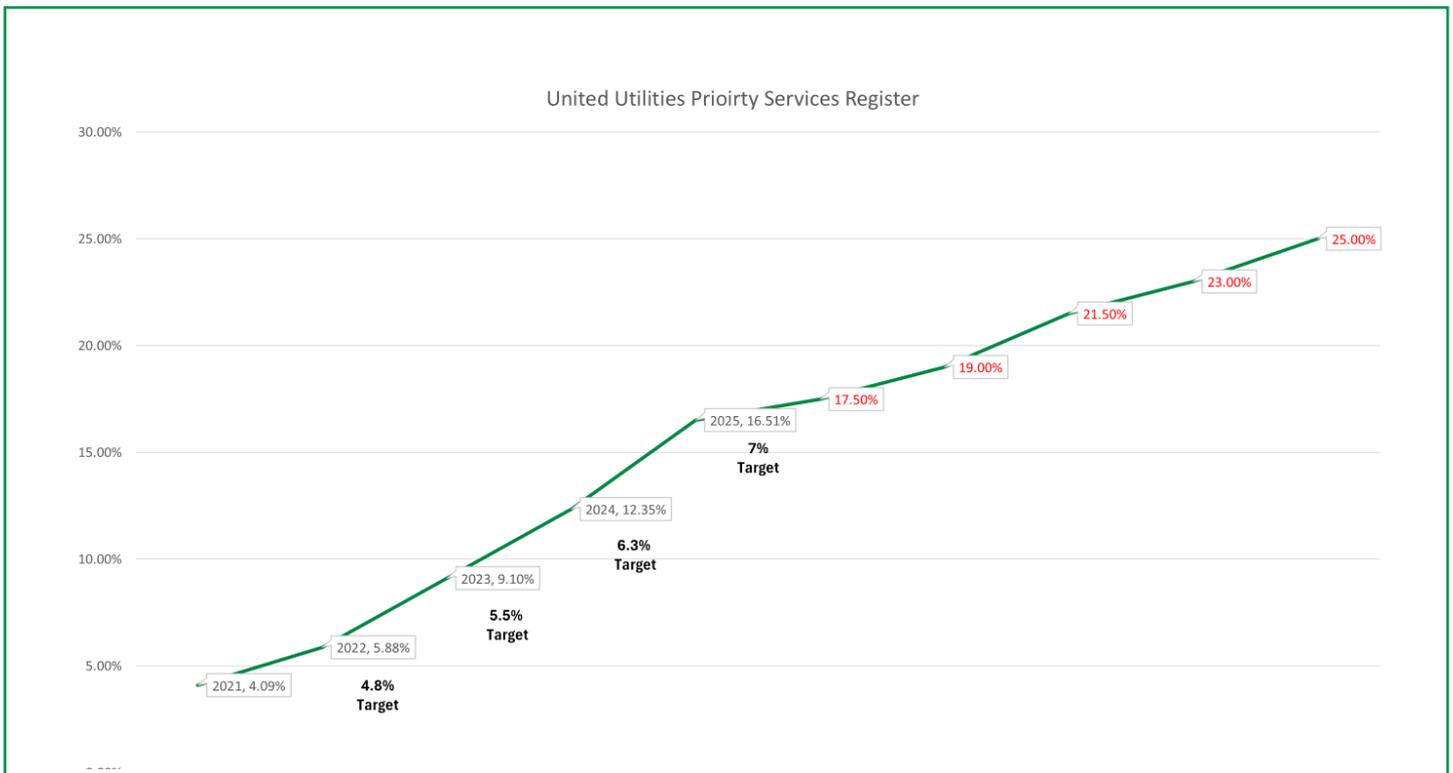
By focusing on the specific needs of each area, we're making sure that our work is more relevant, responsive and effective for the people we serve.

Understanding customers across our region

We use data about local areas to understand the needs of our customers across the North West. This helps us provide the right support to the people who need it most.

By March 2025, we had 540,380 customers on our Priority Services Register. This was an increase of 549% between 2020 and 2025.

We are committed to expanding the reach of our Priority Services to make sure we reach as many people as possible who need or want extra help.



Financial insight

To help identify areas where Priority Services may be needed more, we use a range of insights. These are tools which help us compare factors such as the number of customers who receive benefits and levels of deprivation in different areas, right down to the postcode level. This helps us identify customers who may need help to pay for their water services. We visit areas where there is a

big gap between the number of customers who receive benefits and those who are accessing our affordability schemes. This helps us reach customers who might not know about the support that is available to them. Our team tracks how many people access our affordability schemes and use water meters. This helps us see if our outreach efforts are working and where we can improve.

Understanding customers across our region

Challenge groups partnerships

We work with charities and different industry leaders. Our independent challenge group YourVoice meets throughout the year to share best practice and get feedback on how we can improve our services.

Customer research

We carry out research to understand what our customers need and expect from us. This helps us shape our services to better meet their needs. By understanding our customers' needs and providing tailored support, we make sure that our Priority Services scheme effectively helps people who need it most. Our customer research programme is designed to be inclusive so that the voices of vulnerable customers are heard, whether this is through tailored projects or wider research. For example, we make sure our online research panel, In the Flow, involves customers with different types of vulnerability, including people from households which rely on water for medical reasons. Currently, 20% of people on the panel are vulnerable.



Our journey to 2025

Since the official launch of the Priority Services Register in 2015, we have increased the number of customers receiving support by over 1400%, going above our targets for 2020 to 2025. As of April 2024, more than 400,000 customers across the North West are using our scheme.

In 2020, we achieved certification for British Standard BS18477: 2010 for consumer inclusion. This standard covers how companies work with vulnerable customers. In 2022, this standard developed into an international standard promoting how companies work with vulnerable customers (ISO22458: 2022 Consumer Vulnerability). This standard covers organisational culture and strategy, inclusive design (that is, how companies design their services to be accessible for all customers) and how to identify and respond to vulnerable customers. In March 2023, we applied for accreditation against the new standard, and were one of the first water companies to receive it. Our services are assessed each year, and our accreditation was renewed in May 2024.

It's important that we understand the customers we serve. We value customer feedback and use it to improve our services. We have contacted over 95,000 customers in our research to help build our future business plan for 2025 to 2030. It's clear that customers want us to improve our services, for them and the environment. Our research included a wide range of vulnerable customers so we considered different factors of vulnerability, including financial circumstances, medical needs, age and language barriers, and designed our research to be representative and accessible.

- We provided different ways for customers to take part in our research online and offline (including face-to-face focus groups and paper surveys).
- The research materials we provided were tested and adapted to make sure they were suitable for different levels of understanding.

Our business plan will continue to develop our industry-leading support for vulnerable customers. We will continue to improve the quality and level of support we provide, and by 2030, we want to make sure that 20% of our customers are accessing our Priority Services scheme.

As our research was successful, we used the same approach for developing this vulnerability strategy with customers and organisations across the North West who represent areas of vulnerability. We held in-person sessions, online forums and asked for feedback both online and in person to make sure we are accessible to all.

Since 2022, we have held a vulnerability summit each year. These summits give us an opportunity to share what we are doing to support vulnerable customers with key stakeholders across the charitable sector, local authorities and vulnerability groups. The events allow industry leaders from across the North West to come together, share challenges, develop ideas and create solutions to support customers across the region. At our most recent summit in May 2024, we shared our business plan and our future commitments relating to vulnerable customers with 100 organisations across the region. These organisations provided valuable feedback and creative ideas.



Our 2025 performance

As well as the information we publish about our performance, we have a number of measures in place to help us understand and monitor our services, performance and customer satisfaction.

Our commitments to April 2025	End-of-year performance April 2025
We will increase the number of customers registered for extra help as part of our Priority Services scheme to 7% of our customers by 2025.	As of April 2025, 16% of our customers are registered.
We will contact our customers every two years to make sure their needs and contact details are up to date in our records. We will aim to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● try to contact 90% of our customers; and ● successfully contact 35% of our customers. 	Our end-of-year performance for 2024 to 2025 showed that we tried to contact 92% of our customers and that we successfully contacted 51%.
We will continue to hold the British Standards BS18477:2010 for consumer inclusion (now ISO22458:2022 kitemark standard).	Our accreditation is reviewed each year and we have kept the standard.
We will continue to promote accessibility and inclusion by maintaining our role as one of the main sponsors of Disability Awareness Day, to increase awareness, understanding and engagement with disabled communities across the North West.	We are proud to continue to be one of the main sponsors of Disability Awareness Day, the world's largest non-profit disability exhibition. Our continued involvement reflects our commitment to inclusion, accessibility and raising awareness of the challenges people with disabilities face.
We will continue to grow our network of mental health first aiders and invest in regular training to make sure employees can support mental wellbeing across the organisation.	We have trained and placed 369 mental health first aiders across our service to provide employees with accessible, peer-led support and promote a culture of openness around mental wellbeing.
We will continue to meet the highest standards of customer service and maintain our ServiceMark accreditation with Distinction from the Institute of Customer Service to make sure our customers receive the care, respect and support they deserve.	We've been awarded the Institute of Customer Service's ServiceMark accreditation with Distinction for the second time. Only 15 organisations across sectors such as energy, water, retail, telecoms and financial services hold this award. This reflects our ongoing commitment to providing exceptional customer service.
We will continue to maintain and improve our digital accessibility standards to make sure our website stays inclusive, user-friendly and accessible to everyone, regardless of ability.	Our website has been awarded the Shaw Trust accessibility accreditation, which confirms that it has been tested by people with a wide range of disabilities and meets high standards of digital accessibility. This recognition reflects our commitment to creating inclusive online experiences for all users.

Measures we use to monitor our services and customer satisfaction include:

- feedback from customers through the 'Rant and Rave' survey;
- customer satisfaction surveys;
- asking for feedback after incidents (for example, a burst water main);
- recognising that repeated contact from the same customer could show they have an issue that is not sorted yet or that they need extra support; and
- analysing complaints.

Monitoring our work allows us to change and improve our services and meet customers' changing needs.

Governance

For us, commitment to customers who need extra help starts at the highest level. This is why we report to our board of directors through our environmental, social and governance (ESG) committee.

Our ESG Leadership Group, made up of senior leaders from across the company, support and monitor improvements in our environmental and social performance, and balance these with economic considerations. This careful leadership allows us to develop and maintain effective procedures and action plans. We create action plans to help us manage the effect our work has on the economy, the environment and society, and set and review measurable objectives and improvement targets. Our vulnerability strategy is regularly discussed at the committee and is reviewed each year.



Joining the Priority Services Register

We have worked with support agencies to make sure it is as easy as possible for customers to sign up for Priority Services. In April 2025, there were over 440,000 customers registered for extra support. There are different ways of registering, including by phone, by post, on our website or in person at one of our local community events.

We understand that certain needs may mean that you can't contact us yourself. If this is the case, someone else can register you.

- If you tell one of our employees or contractors that you suffer with a certain health issue or that you need extra support, they may register you.
- Sometimes another organisation, such as your electricity provider, will tell us about your additional needs. We will let you know if we add you to the Priority Services Register because of this.
- A trusted partner, such as your local authority, may share your information with us as part of an incident or in an emergency.
- A carer or family member can tell us that you need extra support and ask us to add you to the register.

We can collect, use and share personal information only when we have a lawful genuine interest and reason to do so. The lawful genuine interest we use is, 'substantial public interest'. This allows us to put the interests of our customers first.

We will do the following in line with appropriate protections, policies, procedures, training and controls.

- Collect and process personal information in line with the requirements of UK data protection laws.
- Only collect and process personal information if it is needed to meet our business needs.
- Make sure the quality of the personal information is accurate.
- Store personal information securely and in line with our Information Security Policy Framework.
- Follow appropriate security measures to protect personal information.
- Only hold personal information for as long as is necessary and in line with legal and regulatory requirements.

- Only share personal information with third parties that take similar steps to make sure information is protected.
- Allow people whose information we hold to exercise their rights under UK data protection laws.
- Keep records of how we process personal information. We regularly carry out Data Protection Impact Assessments and review our data protection policy and controls.

We have data-sharing agreements with energy distribution companies and some fire and rescue services across the North West, which allow us to share personal information when it is in the customer's best interest. This means customers only need to register for the Priority Services Register once, and the relevant organisations will share this information between them as necessary.

When we add customers to the Priority Services Register, we find out why they need extra help and the services that could help them. This allows us to understand their needs and provide the appropriate service. For example, a customer who is blind may benefit from a talking bill (where our Priority Services team will talk them through their bill) or letters written in Braille.

We send all customers a letter welcoming them to the scheme once they are registered for Priority Services. This gives important contact information and sets out the extra help this can expect. The letter will also explain how we handle personal information and how customers can opt out of the Priority Services scheme. We contact our Priority Services customers every two years to make sure their circumstances are still the same. This will help us make sure they are still receiving the most suitable services for their needs.

Accessible, affordable and attentive

We are committed to being attentive to customers' needs and providing services that are accessible and affordable. There are a number of ways in which we will achieve this.



Attentiveness

- Provide excellent customer service.
- Making sure that our employees are trained effectively and have the tools and skills to deal with a wide range of customer needs.
- Listening carefully to vulnerable customers to understand the extra help they need.



Affordability

- Offering high-quality, affordability schemes for customers on a low income.
- Providing £525 million of affordability support to customers across the region, in line with our proposed business plan.



Accessibility

- Making sure our services are accessible for everyone.
- Provide different ways to contact us.
- Having dedicated teams, with separate phone lines, to support all customers on the Priority Services Register.



Accessibility

We want to make sure that we are easy to do business with for all customers, so we have different ways of contacting us.

You can contact us:

- by phone;
- by email;
- on our website;
- by WhatsApp;
- by letter; or
- on social media.



You can also talk to us in person at one of our many community events across the region.

Our website is fully accessible. We were the first water company to receive accreditation from Shaw Trust for using services such as Recite Me to make sure we are accessible to everyone. Since 2018, Recite Me has been used over 2 million times. We also have British Sign Language translation available on many of our videos. Our website includes a self-service tool for customers who don't want to talk to us or who may want to find out information in their own time. This tool is fully compatible with Recite Me.



We have translation services available for customers whose first language isn't English, and we are working to provide improved British Sign Language translation services by the summer of 2024. This will allow us to have instant access to a British Sign Language interpreter so we can provide interpreting services for people when they need them. Our region is diverse and so are we. Together, our employees speak over 20 languages and are on hand to provide support wherever it's needed.

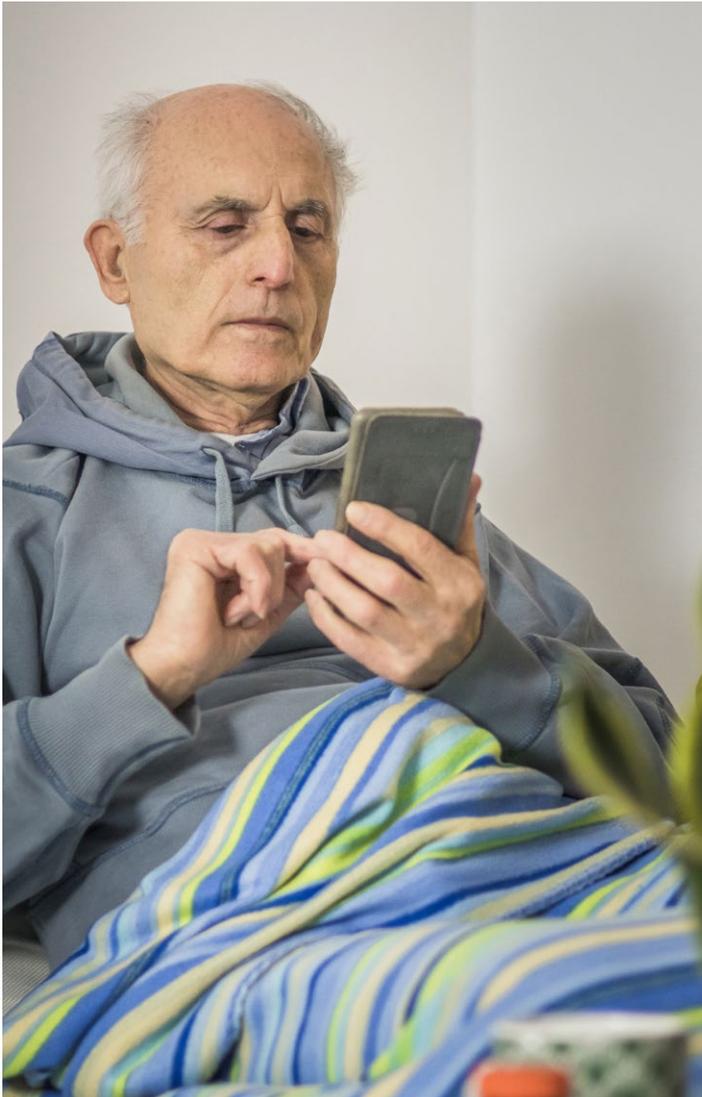


We want to make sure that we explore new technologies, now and in the future. In 2024, we introduced WhatsApp messaging for customers to give another option for people who prefer to contact us using a digital method. We will keep more traditional ways of contacting us available as we explore new and emerging technologies.



Online accessibility

We are dedicated to making sure that all our online resources are accessible and user-friendly for everyone. We understand the importance of providing an inclusive digital experience and we are proud that our online resources meet the highest accessibility standards.



Shaw Trust Accreditation:

Our commitment to accessibility is demonstrated by our Shaw Trust accreditation. This accreditation makes sure that our digital platforms are designed to be accessible to all users, including those with disabilities. Renewing this accreditation each year shows our continued dedication to improving the accessibility of our online services.

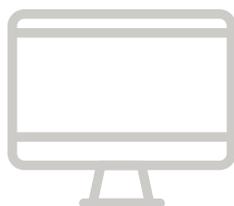
We always aim to make our online resources as user-friendly as possible.

Accessible navigation: We make sure that our website is easy to navigate for users with various needs, including people using screen readers or other technology designed to help with accessibility.

Clear and concise content: We provide information in a clear and concise way to make it easy to understand for all users.

Responsive design: We make sure that our website is fully responsive and accessible on all devices, including smartphones and tablets.

By prioritising accessibility, we make sure that all our customers can easily access the information and services they need, regardless of their individual circumstances. This commitment to inclusivity is a key part of our Priority Services strategy, helping us to better serve our vulnerable customers.



Our commitments

We know that our customers may sometimes need extra help and, with an ageing population, more customers across our communities are likely to need our services and support in the future.

By 2050, it is predicted that one in four people in the UK will be aged 65 or over, compared with one in five people in 2019. Our future commitments include increasing the number of customers we support.



We plan to provide £1 million of emergency financial support to vulnerable customers affected by wastewater flooding.



We will continue to hold the British Standards BS18477:2010 for customer inclusion (now ISO22458:2022 kitemark standard).



We will develop further data-sharing agreements with organisations across the North West to make sure we are supporting as many vulnerable customers as possible.

We will continue to create more partnerships with charities to reach communities who need extra help.

We will increase awareness of our Priority Services scheme among customers and organisations.

We will be present in the community across our region to help create a stronger, greener and healthier North West.



We will continue to develop the ways we support vulnerable customers. We are aiming to provide support services to 20% of our customers by 2030.

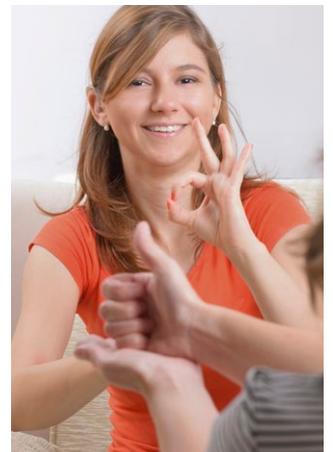


Extra support where it's needed most

Many of our services benefit all customers on the Priority Services Register, including the following.

- You have access to a dedicated team, specially trained to help vulnerable customers.
- You can set up a password for us to use if we need to visit your home, so you know the visitor is genuine.
- Our 'knock and wait' service means we will wait outside your home for much longer than usual after knocking to allow you enough time to answer the door.
- We offer affordability schemes to customers who are on low incomes, as well as flexible payment plans and options to help you manage your budget.
- We provide free water-efficiency devices, which can help cut your bills if you have a water meter.
- When we are carrying out planned work in our communities, we consider customers who need extra help and make sure they can access their homes.
- We offer different ways to contact us, which makes us accessible to everyone.
- We contact our Priority Services customers as soon as possible if we need to turn off water supplies in an emergency, for example, if there is a burst water main.
- We make sure our customer-facing teams are trained to spot signs that a customer may be vulnerable, such as hearing a baby crying in the background during a phone call or seeing walking aids or ramps during a home visit.

We also offer a range of services that can provide tailored support based on people's different needs.



Extra support where it's needed most

Dialysis

More than 1.8 million people in England have diagnosed chronic kidney disease (CKD). A further 1 million people are thought to have the condition but haven't yet received a diagnosis.

Home dialysis relies on a machine to filter blood for hours at a time. This treatment uses a lot of energy and water. Home dialysis machines can use up to 7,502 litres of water a week on top of your usual water use. This is equal to almost 80 showers a week.

We want to make sure we understand our customers and their needs as much as possible and that's why we've formed a partnership with the UK's leading kidney patient charity, Kidney Care UK. This will allow us to provide vital support to people in our region who have chronic kidney disease. The partnership will focus on supporting around 55,000 people in the most deprived areas in Liverpool, Manchester, Salford and Lancashire.

Every kidney patient in the North West will be able to access extra help through Priority Services. This includes customers who have water meters and use a lot of water.

We will do the following.

- Deliver bottled water to our most vulnerable customers first if we need to turn off water supplies. We will also communicate with customers throughout interruptions to provide updates while their water is off.
- Try to plan work that involves turning off the water supply at a time when it won't interrupt a customer's dialysis.
- If we have to turn a customer's water off on a day when they have dialysis, we'll try to set up extra help and support and will give the customer as much notice as we can using their preferred contact method.
- Visit renal units (specialised centres which focus on kidney health) across our region to increase awareness of Priority Services among customers who need our help most.
- Continue our strong relationship with Kidney Care UK to reach more customers who may need to be on the Priority Services Register or WaterSure scheme to reduce the cost of using a lot of water. WaterSure is one of our support schemes. It is available to customers who have a water meter, receive benefits and use a lot of water due to poor health or having a large family. If a customer qualifies for WaterSure, their yearly bill is capped at the average metered household bill (this is not based on how many people live in the property). If the actual bill is less than the average bill, they'll be charged the lower amount.

Death of a loved one

Grief affects us all in different ways and feelings of sadness and hopelessness are common after someone dies.

We will do the following.

- Provide access to a dedicated team, specially trained to help support customers through this difficult time.
- Make it quick and easy for customers to tell us when someone has died.
- Tell customers about different charities and organisations that can help.
- Make sure that our mental health first aiders are always on hand to help our own employees.



We understand it's important to recognise when someone might need extra support.

Extra support where it's needed most

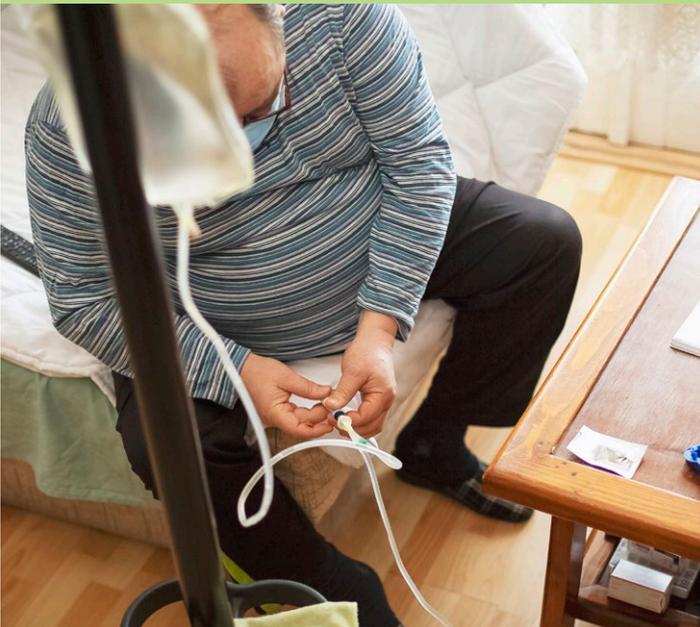
Chronic or serious illness

We recognise that customers living with short and long-term or terminal illness can be faced with many challenges every day.

Almost half of the UK population experience a long-term health problem. Understanding customers and their specific needs helps us provide extra support when they need it most.

We will do the following.

- Deliver bottled water to our most vulnerable customers first if we need to turn off water supplies. We will also communicate with customers throughout interruptions to provide updates while their water is off.
- Look at forming further partnerships with organisations across the North West to help us reach more customers who may need to be on the Priority Services Register.
- Contact customers in their preferred way if we need to turn their water supply off to carry out planned work.



Short and long-term, or terminal illnesses cause challenges every day.

Dementia

It is estimated that around 800,000 people in the UK are currently living with some form of dementia.

With that figure set to increase because of the ageing population, and advances in medical technology, we want to do as much as we can to make sure we are providing customers with the best possible support.

We will do the following.

- Work with our customer-facing teams to make sure they understand dementia.
- Tell customers about our nominee scheme when they are registering for Priority Services.
- Deliver bottled water to our most vulnerable customers first if we need to turn off water supplies. We will also communicate with customers throughout the interruptions to provide updates while their water is off.
- Contact customers in their preferred way if we need to turn their water supply off to carry out planned work.



800,000 people in the UK are currently living with some form of dementia.

Extra support where it's needed most

Blind or partially sighted

Around 340,000 people in the UK are registered blind or partially sighted.

This includes people whose vision could be improved by wearing glasses. There can be many reasons why people don't have their vision corrected, including additional needs. Although sight loss can affect people of all ages, nearly 80% of people experiencing sight loss are aged 65 or over and around 60% are aged 75 or over. We want to be more aware of sight loss to understand what further support we can give to customers who are blind or partially sighted.

We will do the following.

- Offer customers the option to receive their bill in different formats such as Braille or large print.
- Offer a 'talking bill' service where our dedicated Priority Services team will talk the customer through their bill.
- Tell customers about our nominee scheme when they are registering for Priority Services.
- Offer the Recite Me accessibility tool on our website to allow customers to change how they view the website in a way that meets their individual needs.
- Deliver bottled water to our most vulnerable customers first if we need to turn off water supplies. We will also communicate with customers throughout interruptions to provide updates while their water is off.
- Contact customers in their preferred way if we need to turn their water supply off to carry out planned work.



Restricted movement

It is estimated that one in six of us will experience significant disability.

Mobility problems can affect the lower or upper body. People may need to use walking sticks, walking frames or wheelchairs to move about, or may have limited or no use of their arms and hands.

We want to make sure that we understand customers' needs so we can provide them with the best support when they need it most.

We will do the following.

- Move water meters, free of charge, from outside to inside the home if the customer has trouble accessing their meter.
- Deliver bottled water to our most vulnerable customers first if we need to turn off water supplies. We will also communicate with customers throughout interruptions to provide updates while their water is off.
- Contact customers in their preferred way if we need to turn their water supply off to carry out planned work.



One in five people will experience sight loss in their lifetime.

One in six of us will experience significant disability.

Extra support where it's needed most

Mental health

Our mental health includes our emotional, psychological and social wellbeing.

Mental health affects how we think, feel and act and how we handle stress, relate to others and make healthy choices. Having good mental health is important at every stage of life.

Opening up about our struggles can be difficult, but not talking about them can make us feel isolated. Our caring team, trained by people from Samaritans and Mind, can offer the support customers need.

We will do the following.

- Encourage our employees to refer customers to other trusted charities and organisations for further support.
- Tell customers about our nominee scheme when they are registering for Priority Services.
- Continue to support national Mental Health Awareness Week each year.
- Make sure our employees know how to access support from our mental health first aiders.
- Provide specific training to our employees to help them support customers who are suffering from mental health conditions.



Each year, one in four people in the UK will experience a mental health problem.

Not being able to communicate in English

Our region is diverse and, over the last 70 years in particular, the North West has welcomed people from across the world..

3.7% of people in our region live in a household where English isn't spoken. We are passionate about supporting customers who may need some extra support when communicating with us.

We will do the following.

- Offer an interpreting service for phone calls through LanguageLine Solutions and make sure our customer-facing employees understand how to use it.
- Continue to make our website inclusive by promoting Recite Me, which translates the information on our website into over 100 languages.
- Tell customers about our nominee scheme when they are registering for Priority Services.
- Tell customers we can send their bills and other documents in their preferred language.
- Work closely with our own multicultural group (a network which recognises and celebrates the different faiths, cultures, religions, ethnic backgrounds and traditions of our employees) and our diversity and inclusion team to share best practice.



3.7% of people in our region live in a household where English isn't spoken.

Extra support where it's needed most

Developmental conditions

2.16% of adults and 2.5% of children are thought to have a developmental condition or a learning disability.

People with developmental conditions can often experience difficulties with everyday activities, socialising or managing money. Customers with developmental conditions may find it harder to communicate with us and may be affected in different ways by changes to their day-to-day routine (for example, interruptions to their water supply).

We will do the following.

- Tell customers about our nominee scheme when they are registering for Priority Services.
- Deliver bottled water to our most vulnerable customers first if we need to turn off water supplies. We will also communicate with customers throughout interruptions to provide updates while their water is off.



2.16% of adults and 2.5% of children are believed to have a developmental condition or a learning disability.

Pensionable age

People aged over 65 make up the fastest-growing group in society. Research tells us that, by 2050, one in four people in the UK will be over the age of 65, compared with one in five people in 2019.

Ageing is not an illness, but it can often make life a little more challenging.

We will do the following.

- Tell customers about our nominee scheme when they are registering for Priority Services.
- Provide support to customers who can't access their water meter for reasons such as mobility needs. For example, we can read customers' meters or move meters to a place that is easier for customers to read.
- Deliver bottled water to our most vulnerable customers first if we need to turn off water supplies. We will also communicate with customers throughout interruptions to provide updates while their water is off.
- Prioritise customers who are aged 90 or over when responding to incidents and interruptions to water supplies.



People aged 65 and over currently make up one-fifth of the North West population.

Extra support where it's needed most

Hearing and speech difficulties

We understand that, for many people, picking up the phone might not be the best form of communication.

We want to make our services accessible for all our customers and that is why we provide different ways to communicate with us.

We will do the following.

Make it as easy as possible for customers to communicate with us by providing different ways for them to contact us, including:

- by webchat;
- through a text-relay service;
- on social media;
- in person at our community events;
- through our nominee scheme;
- by email;
- by writing to us; and
- by WhatsApp message.

We will continue to offer British Sign Language translation services and work with different organisations and charities to make sure we are as accessible as possible.



We want to make our services accessible for customers.

Families with children under five years old

Becoming a parent can be an exciting and scary time all at once.

We are passionate about understanding our customers so we can respond quickly to their needs, and we know that having young children means water is vitally important. Our new partnership with Bounty is aimed at reaching out to new parents to help in times of need. Bounty is an organisation which supports families in the journey to parenthood. It aims to be the first place new parents turn to for advice, help, reassurance and information.

We will do the following.

- Tell customers about our nominee scheme when they are registering for Priority Services.
- Deliver bottled water to our most vulnerable customers first if we need to turn off water supplies. We will also communicate with customers throughout interruptions to provide updates while their water is off.
- Work with charities and organisations to create new opportunities to reach out to new parents who could benefit from Priority Services.



We are passionate about understanding our customers.

Affordability support schemes

We offer a full package of affordability schemes, with support in place for all customers. We plan to develop this across 2025 to 2030 to make sure even more customers can access our support schemes when they need help.



3.2 million household customers



We offer the following financial-support schemes for customers on a low income.

- Back on track
- Help to Pay
- Payment Match
- United Utilities Trust fund
- Watersure
- Watersure plus
- Low Income Discount



We offer support for customers on a lower to middle income.

- Lower Bill Guarantee for as long as you need it
- Priority support fund for sewer flooding
- Debt support for those in need
- Free online budgeting support



We offer an attentive and accessible service for all our customers.

- Advice about water efficiency
- Different ways to contact us
- Priority Services scheme
- Flexible payment plans
- Hardship hub.

Water without worry

Affordability support schemes

We offer financial support for customers on a low income.

- If you're experiencing financial difficulties and are worried about paying your water bill, we may be able to cap your bill with our Back on Track scheme. The scheme is there to support our customers who receive benefits that are assessed on their income and are behind on their water bill payments. It can also help you if your total household income is £21,500 or less and there has been a recent change in circumstance that has had a negative effect on your financial situation.
- If one person in your household receives Pension Credit, and everyone else receives the State Pension, you can apply for our Help to Pay scheme. If we accept you on to the scheme, we will cap your yearly charges. The amount you pay will depend on whether you live alone or with other adults.
- Our Payment Matching scheme is for customers who are significantly behind on their water payments. For every £1 you pay, we'll pay £1 too. After 12 months, we'll increase our contribution to £2 for every £1 you pay until your debt is cleared. You must be able to pay your ongoing water charges, plus the minimum payment we set, towards your arrears.
- United Utilities Trust fund is an independent grant-making trust, committed to helping people out of poverty and debt.
- In certain situations, another person can register you for Priority Services.
 - If you tell one of our employees or contractors that you suffer with a certain health issue or need extra support, they may register you.
 - Another organisation, such as your electricity provider, may let us know about your additional needs.
 - A trusted partner, such as your local authority, may share your information with us as part of an incident or in an emergency.
 - A carer or family member may tell us that you need extra support and ask us to add you to the Priority Services Register.
- WaterSure and WaterSure Plus are two of our support schemes. They are available to customers who have a water meter and use a lot of water



because of poor health or because they have a large family. We can't make your water bill disappear, but we can put a cap on how we charge.

- We want to do all we can to help our customers who are most in need of support with their water bill because of a low household income. Customers who meet certain low-income criteria will automatically receive a yearly discount of £50 on their water charges. If you are eligible, you will see this discount on your first water bill due on or after 1 April each year that you qualify.

We offer support for customers on a lower to middle income.

- The majority of our customers who switch to a meter save at least £100 a year. We fit meters for free and you have up to two years to see how much you save before deciding whether to stay on metered charges. Our lowest bill guarantee means that you won't pay more than you do now during the two-year trial, and any savings you make are yours to keep.
- Our services are not just about providing clean water. We are committed to responding to customers who are experiencing issues with sewerage at their properties. When dealing with sewerage incidents, we prioritise our Priority Services customers. We make sure that the teams who attend understand the additional needs of these customers.

Affordability support schemes

- We are aware that the damage caused by sewer flooding may have a negative effect on some customers so, as part of our 2025-2030 business plan, we will commit £1 million to provide financial support to those customers.
- We can help with household budgeting. We're working with **IE Hub** to offer our customers free access to their online budgeting tool. This allows customers to create an online record of income and spending to better manage household finances and share it with companies who need it.

We offer an attentive and accessible service for all our customers.

- Advice about water efficiency
- Different ways to contact us
- Priority Services scheme
- Flexible payment plans
- We work with the Hardship Hub. It can be very worrying if you're struggling with money and debt issues, and finding out where you can get help and support is sometimes very difficult. If you live in the North West, the Hardship Hub can help point you in the right direction to find real solutions to your problems.



Water without worry

We don't want anyone in the North West to worry about their water bill, especially our most vulnerable customers.

This is why, during 2025 to 2030, we are planning to introduce a package of support that would increase the level of financial help available to customers to £525 million. This will include

£200 million of shareholder-funded support (the largest shareholder commitment in the water sector), which will help us support 590,000 customers.

This will be the biggest support package we have offered to customers, and means more than one in six customers will receive some level of support towards their bill.

Water without worry

Accessible support

You can apply for support in a way which suits you, through Freephone services, by filling in an online application form, by email or by webchat. You can also apply for help through a debt-advice organisation or one of our partner organisations.

We are working towards making sure that customers who are eligible for support get the help they need as soon as possible after reaching out to us. We have focused on making sure our support schemes are accessible. We have a dedicated affordability team, specially trained to recognise and be understanding towards people who are struggling to pay. This team has played an important part in growing our affordability schemes.



Extra help when the water supply is interrupted

We are committed to providing help when customers need it most. For the majority of vulnerable customers, this is often when their water supply is interrupted or there is an incident, such as a flood.

If we need to turn the water supply off, we take a tiered approach to providing services. This makes sure we provide water to the most vulnerable customers, and those who rely on water for medical reasons, first. Our vulnerable customer and incident team has 30 members, all specially trained in supporting customers with additional needs. The team is on hand to keep a close eye on any upcoming emergency situations and will contact Priority Services customers with updates during incidents.

Our team members may call, text or email depending on the customer’s individual circumstances and which contact method they have told us they prefer. We will deliver bottled water to our most vulnerable customers if their water supply is likely to be off for over six hours.

The table below shows the tiered approach we use to prioritise customers who are most vulnerable.

Tier	Description	Communication	Bottled water
1	The most vulnerable customers, including those who rely on water for medical equipment, cannot leave the property or have a chronic illness.	We will communicate with customers using whichever method they have told us they prefer. This could be by text, email or phone call. Our friendly team will provide updates throughout the incident.	We will prioritise the most vulnerable customers and deliver bottled water to them if their water is likely to be off for over six hours.
2	This includes customers who may need extra support, particularly in the way we communicate with them.	We will communicate with customers using whichever method they have told us they prefer. This could be by text, email or phone call. Our friendly team will provide updates throughout the incident.	We will deliver bottled water to customers if their water is likely to be off for over 12 hours.
3	Customers who are less likely to be severely affected by an incident. This is often people who are experiencing life changes that are making them temporarily vulnerable.	We will communicate with customers using whichever method they have told us they prefer. This could be by text, email or phone call. Our friendly team will provide updates throughout the incident.	We will deliver bottled water to customers if their water is likely to be off for over 12 hours.



We are always on hand to help. If a customer’s water supply is interrupted and they tell us they need bottled water but they are not in tier 1, we will do everything we can to provide the bottled water they have asked for.

Incidents aren’t always about the water supply being turned off. We recognise the impact that changes to water quality can have on some customers. We will always communicate with customers when we are aware of a problem that affects the quality of their water, and assess whether we need to provide bottled water.

Supporting our customers with sewer flooding

Our priorities are not just about clean water supplies. We are committed to responding to customers who are experiencing issues with sewerage at their properties. To make sure we help Priority Services customers as quickly as possible, we prioritise people with additional needs.

Sewer flooding or blockages that may restrict the use of toilets, baths and showers can mean vulnerable customers cannot use facilities that are essential to meeting their needs. When this happens, we will work to fix the problem and can provide alternative accommodation if needed.

The damage caused by sewer flooding may have a negative effect on some customers' homes and wellbeing. We have planned to set aside £1 million during 2025 to 2030 to provide financial support to people affected by flood damage.

We know that flooding can have a lasting emotional effect. That's why we offer mental health support, including counselling, to customers who need it most. We are committed to helping those most affected, making sure they receive the right care when they need it.

Compensation

We are committed to providing customers with a service that is tailored to them, and we want to make sure we put things right if that doesn't happen. Customers can claim compensation if we fail to meet the commitments shown in the table below.

Commitment	Compensation
We will register you on the Priority Services Register within five days of contacting us.	£50
We will send your bill in the format you have asked for such as in Braille or large print, or on coloured paper.	£50
We will deliver bottled water to you when there is an emergency and your water is likely to be off for over: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • six hours if you are in tier 1 (our most vulnerable customers); or • 12 hours if you are in tier 2 or 3. 	£100

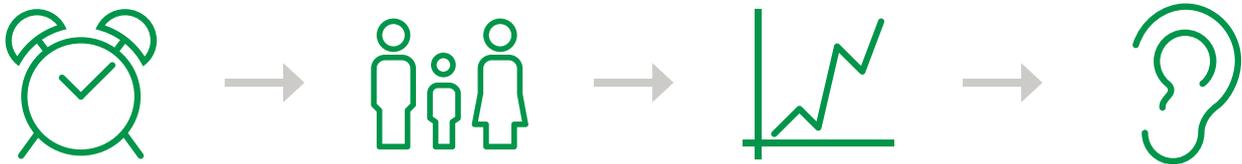


Putting our services into practice

In order to make sure we are providing a high standard of service for customers and that we are accessible to everyone, it is important for us to assess how customers feel about the services that we offer. Our research and feedback show that we are providing tailored support and are continuing to meet the changing needs of customers.

We value feedback from our Priority Services customers as it plays a crucial role in shaping the service we offer. We are committed to making sure that our services continue to meet the individual needs of our customers. To achieve this, we have established a thorough feedback review process.

Feedback Review Process:



Timely response:

We aim to review all feedback from our Priority Services customers within 10 days. This makes sure we consider and act on any concerns or suggestions quickly.

Customer-centred approach:

Feedback from our customers is essential in helping us understand their experiences and needs. We ask for customers' views through surveys, by contacting them direct and when they are taking part in community events.

Continuous improvement:

We use the understanding we gain from customer feedback to continuously improve our Priority Services scheme to make sure our services stay relevant and effective in dealing with the challenges our vulnerable customers face.

Open communication:

We always tell our customers about the actions we have taken in response to their feedback. This openness builds trust and shows our commitment to listening and responding to their needs.

By prioritising customer feedback, we can make sure that our Priority Services scheme meets the changing needs of our customers. This commitment to continuous improvement helps us provide the highest level of support to those who need it most.

Putting our services into practice

CASE STUDY:

Building trust through a personal approach, listening and understanding

Sometimes, the most important thing we can do is simply take the time to listen — and respond with understanding.

In May 2024, our metering team reached out for support after a customer had cancelled over 40 scheduled appointments to read their meter. The existing meter wasn't recording how much water they were using due to a missing non-return valve, meaning a new meter was essential.

When we contacted the customer, it became clear that his cancellations were due to deep anxiety and concern. With a medical need for water, learning needs and severe anxiety, he was extremely worried that the work would leave him without a water supply. The fear of disruption led him to cancel each appointment on the day it was due.

By taking the time to explain the process clearly, answer his questions and build a relationship based on trust, our Vulnerable Customer Engagement Lead was able to reassure him. The customer asked if they could be there with him on the day of the appointment and we made that happen.

We also contacted the customer's mum, arranged the appointment for a day she could be there and told the engineer about the situation. With the right support in place, the new meter was successfully fitted and we continued to check in with the customer afterwards to make sure he was happy and reassured.

This situation reminded us that a one-size-fits-all approach isn't the best approach to take for customers. What works for one customer may not work for another and that's why a personal approach matters. This case highlights the importance of seeing the person behind the account. By listening, adapting and responding with care, we were able to deliver the service this man needed in a way that worked for him.

Priority Services is about more than the services we offer – it's about how we offer them. Sometimes, the most meaningful support starts with understanding.



Putting our services into practice

CASE STUDY:

Our bereavement journey

We know that losing a loved one is one of the most difficult experiences a person can face.

During these times, customers need more than just a service – they need compassion, patience and understanding. That’s why we have a dedicated bereavement team, specially trained to support customers with compassion and care. Every day, we receive heartfelt feedback that reflects the genuine kindness and professionalism of our team.

However, we also know that there’s always room to improve. One customer’s feedback stood out

– the only way to tell us about the death of a loved one was over the phone. This method doesn’t suit everyone, especially during emotionally overwhelming moments.

Thanks to this feedback, we took action.

Customers can now tell us about the death of a loved one by filling in a simple, secure online form.

This form is available to access at any time on our website. It allows customers, family members or

representatives to share the necessary information at a time that feels right for them, without the pressure of a phone call.

This new option is part of our broader commitment to making our services more accessible, sensitive and supportive – especially during life’s most challenging times.

The bereavement form is:

- available to fill in 24 hours a day, seven days a week on our website;
- secure and simple to fill in; and
- designed to allow users to share only what they’re comfortable with.

Our Priority Services team will provide follow-up support when needed.

This new form ensures makes sure that customers can reach out in the way that feels most comfortable, whether online or by phone, and get the compassionate support they deserve.



Putting our services into practice

“Today’s call was one of those calls that nobody wants to make. To inform of two family members passing away. The lady I spoke to was so lovely and understanding. There was one question that she asked, and it was the first time I had this in all these heart-breaking phone calls, “Are you OK, do you have someone looking out for you?” In grief it’s a lonely journey and you don’t really ever ask yourself that question, but it warmed my heart that someone could be a little light in the dark journey.”

Female, experiencing bereavement

“I have cognitive difficulties since I had a stroke and, therefore, struggle in many ways, but my recent call to United Utilities was made so easy and stress-free because of the lady who took the call. The lady I spoke to was extremely understanding, patient and efficient and really put my mind at ease, she explained everything to me in a way that was so helpful and that I could understand, and I didn’t feel rushed or uncomfortable. She was absolutely perfect.”

Male, Priority Services customer

“I was kept informed when, during and after the issue was occurring... I was supplied and delivered a case of water to my home... United Utilities are always on the ball, always there to help.”

Male, Priority Services customer (blind), experienced a water-supply interruption for six hours

“They were just brilliant, kept us up to date all day long and even dropped off water for everyone. Wish every other service was as efficient.”

Female, Priority Services customer (aged over 65), experienced a water-supply interruption for eight hours

“Although inconvenient, I have to admit the communication from United Utilities was excellent throughout the shutdown. We had two deliveries of bottled water during the period so we managed OK.”

Male, Priority Services customer (suffering with chronic illness), experienced a water-supply interruption for six hours

How we will measure our success

Staying true to our commitments

To make sure we're providing the high standards customers expect, we're committed to always monitoring our performance against clearly defined targets. This helps us to:

- show customers how well we are meeting our commitments;
- identify areas for improvement;
- celebrate successes and share best practices; and
- use data to make decisions that will benefit our customers and communities.

By keeping a close eye on our progress, we can make sure that we're not just meeting expectations, but going beyond them.

Our commitments to 2030	How we will achieve this
Increase the number of customers registered for extra help as part of our Priority Services scheme to 25% of our customers by 2030.	Increase the percentage of customers on the Priority Service Register by at least 1.5% each year between 2025 and 2030.
Contact our customers every two years to make sure their needs and contact details are up to date in our records. We will aim to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • try to contact 90% of our customers; and • successfully contact 35% of our customers. 	We will try to contact 90% of customers and aim to successfully contact 35% of customers on the Priority Services Register to ask them about their needs and update our records if there are any changes.
We will continue to hold the British Standards BS18477:2010 for consumer inclusion (now ISO22458:2022 Kitemark standard).	To maintain our current accreditation we must undergo an in-person review by external auditors who look at the processes, policies and services our teams offer to make sure we meet the needs of vulnerable customers.
We will build more data-sharing agreements with organisations across the North West to make sure we are supporting as many vulnerable customers as possible.	We will aim to increase our current data-sharing agreements with more fire services, local authorities and housing associations across the North West.
We will identify and use new technology to improve the service we can offer. We will use new technology to support customers and make sure our services are accessible, affordable and we are attentive to the needs of all customers.	We will use new technology to help us make sure customers have a positive experience when using our services, and always focus on customers who may need a little extra help.
We will continue to create more partnerships with charities to reach communities who need extra help.	We will aim to create at least one new partnership with a new charity each year.
We will increase awareness of our Priority Services scheme among customers and organisations.	We will make sure that 65% of our customers know about our Priority Services scheme by 2030 by continuing to work with our stakeholders, promote the services we offer and being present in the community.
We will be present in the community across our region to help create a stronger, greener and healthier North West.	We will attend at least 75 community events each year.

In our business plan submitted in October 2023, we committed to increasing the number of customers registered for our Priority Services to 20%. Since then, we've continued to drive this growth identifying customers who would benefit from the additional support we offer. We've seen a substantial increase in registrations. Building on our insights and momentum, we are now extending our commitment—aiming to reach 25% registration by 2030.

How will we measure our success?

Priority services AMP 8 target growth:

The table below shows the target growth of the Priority Services Register across the next five years, reflecting the aim to register 25% of customers by 2030.

	2025 to 2026 AMP8	2026 to 2027 AMP8	2027 to 2028 AMP8	2029 to 2020 AMP8	2030 to 2031 AMP8
Increase in the number of people registered for Priority Services	17.5%	19%	21.5%	23%	25%

We will also use measures within our business as key indicators that the services we offer are meeting customers' needs. We will aim:

- to achieve customer satisfaction scores of 90% for customers on the Priority Services Register; and
- to solve 90% of customer queries first time.

Removing the barriers to success?

We recognise the challenges ahead in making sure our services continue to meet the needs of our communities across the region. With a clear plan in place, we are prepared to tackle these barriers head-on. We are committed to always improving. We will identify and respond to new challenges to make sure no one is left behind.

Challenge

Making customers aware of the Priority Services scheme and the support they can get.

Short term (2025 to 2026)

Working direct with our communities is essential to raising awareness of the Priority Services Register. That's why we are committed to attending at least 75 community events each year across the North West. By being visible and accessible, we can make sure the people who need our support know where and how to find it.

We understand that many people only realise they need extra support when they experience a disruption to their water supply. We will run targeted social media campaigns in areas affected by supply interruptions. These campaigns will raise awareness of the Priority Services Register to help customers understand the support which is available and encourage them to sign up for it before they need it.

We communicate with customers during interruptions to their water supply and keep them up to date with what is happening. As part of our plans to continuously improve, we will explore opportunities to promote the Priority Services Register when communicating with these customers. This will help raise awareness, encourage more customers to register for Priority services and make sure that more customers receive the tailored support they need during service disruptions.

We will use our strong regional partnerships to promote Priority Services. We will continue to work closely with Kidney Care UK to support community events in dialysis units across the North West. This initiative aims to improve patient experience, raise awareness of available support and strengthen community links within kidney care services.

Long term (2026 to 2030)

Our social workers who have joined the Priority Services team will work with the social sector across the five counties we serve. This will help to promote our services, teach professionals within the sector and provide direct support in cases where our services could benefit customers. By building strong relationships with social care networks, we are aiming to reach more vulnerable individuals and make sure they receive the tailored support they need.

Addressing the barriers to success?

Challenge

Identifying and registering those customers who would benefit from extra help.

Short term (2025 to 2026)

We will continue to use data to carry out a full analysis of our Priority Services Register to identify any gaps in the service we provide. This includes looking at differences in services across different counties and any customer needs that we are not yet meeting.

We will use promotional events and strategic partnerships to raise awareness of the Priority Services scheme and register eligible customers who could benefit from extra support. This will make sure that support reaches those who need it most. We want to close the gaps in who can access support and improve community engagement.

We will use advanced technology, including speech analytics which uses AI software that can use a conversation with a customer to determine if they may need a little extra help. This will identify customers who may benefit from our Priority Services scheme. This will allow us to spot missed opportunities where services were not promoted during conversations with customers and make sure we provide follow-up support when it is needed. We can improve the ways we offer our services and improve customer outcomes.

Long term (2026 to 2030)

Sharing data is a vital part of identifying customers who may need extra support. It also reduces the burden on customers to repeatedly share personal information with multiple services. We will:

- continue to promote sharing data within the water sector and with others (such as fire services); and
- develop formal data-sharing agreements with partner organisations across the North West, including fire and rescue services, local authorities and housing associations.

These partnerships will help us reach more vulnerable customers efficiently and deliver more joined-up and responsive support.

Addressing the barriers to success?

Challenge

Making sure customers know about the additional help they can expect to receive during a water supply interruption or emergency incident.

Short term (2025 to 2026)

We want our customers to understand the support they can expect from us and how we will provide that support. We carry out research to help us better understand customers' views and experiences. We are developing our welcome letter to set out what each customer can expect from the moment they join the Priority Services Register. This personalised approach will help build trust, set clear service standards and make sure customers feel informed and supported from the outset.

We are proud of how we manage incidents and we will stay committed to always improving how we communicate with customers. We want to make sure customers know exactly what to expect during and after any incident which affects their water or wastewater services.

Long term (2026 to 2030)

Customer feedback is valuable and we recognise that expectations can vary significantly depending on individual needs. To make sure our services are always responsive and effective, we will carry out targeted research following incidents to better understand customers' views and experiences relating to how well we met their expectations. We will use this feedback to inform improve the way we respond to incidents services, including meeting customers' expectations around services and timescales, communicating with customers, communication quality, delivering bottled water, and providing access to alternative supplies of water.

Challenge

An overcomplicated or intrusive registration process.

Short term (2025 to 2026)

We recognise that some customers can feel uncomfortable admitting that they need extra support during a conversation with a contact centre agent. While our agents are trained to pick up on cues and offer support, we are also using new technology, such as speech analytics, to help identify customers who may benefit from Priority Services without needing them to give us sensitive information. This approach allows us to follow up phone calls with different methods of communication, such as email or messages included in customers' bills, making the process more discreet and customer-friendly.

Long term (2026 to 2030)

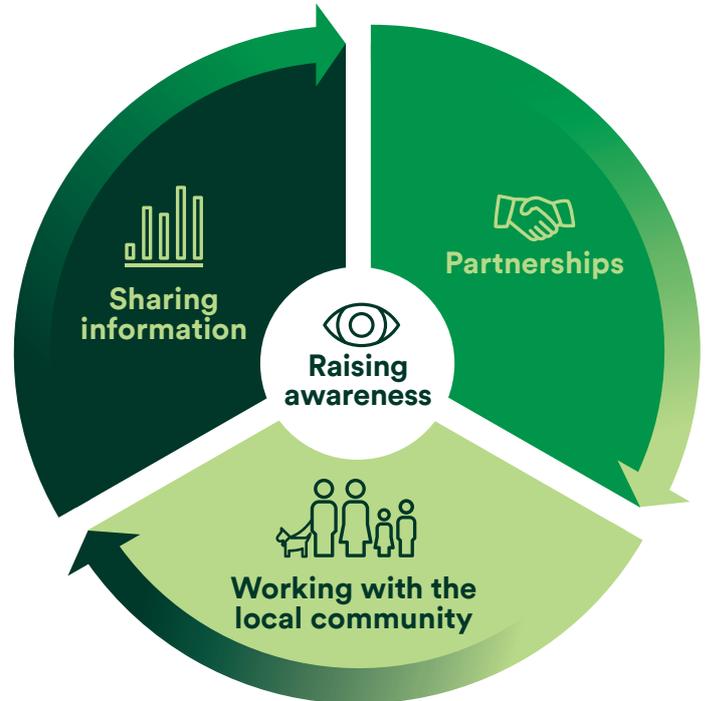
We understand that sharing personal information can be challenging for some customers. To create a more comfortable and respectful experience, we will review our registration process to make sure it offers the best possible customer journey. Our aim is to reduce any feelings of intrusion while maintaining the effectiveness of our Priority Services Register.

Raising awareness

Raising awareness of the Priority Service Register is vital in making sure that customers with additional needs across the North West receive the best possible service.

Research carried out by the Consumer Council for Water (CCW) in the Water Matters 2024 report shows that 51% of people in our region are aware of the Priority Services Register. This is higher than the industry average but we still have more work to do. The key to raising awareness lies in understanding our region and the people we serve. We know that the North West is home to 47% of the most deprived areas in England, with six of the top-10 most deprived areas across the country being in our region. Over 1 million people in the North West are from an ethnic minority, with 3.7% of the region living in a household where there are no English speakers. We know that 19.4% of people living in the North West are disabled (as defined by the Equality Act) and a further 6.7% of people suffer with long-term physical or mental health conditions that do not limit their day-to-day activities.

To help us raise awareness of the Priority Services Register, we have dedicated engagement and outreach employees who work in our local communities, from Carlisle to Crewe.



Awareness doesn't just happen out in the community. We make sure that all our employees are fully trained in how to recognise customers' additional needs during the conversations, face-to-face visits and other interactions they have with customers every day.

Working with the local community



We believe that the best way to work with communities is to be a part of them. We are proud to live and work in the communities we serve. From coffee mornings and 'mums and tots' groups, to hospital visits, our passionate team will be there to spread the word and let the people of the North West know we care and we are here.



Raising awareness

Our Partnerships



In order to successfully deliver affordable, accessible and attentive services that customers deserve, we have worked hard over the last five years to engage with our local communities and create partnerships with organisations across the region.

These partnerships have not only allowed us to reach out to more than 400,000 customers, but also provide us with an understanding of the diverse communities we serve. Working together is essential and we are continuing to develop our partnerships.

We have secured partnerships with a variety of organisations who support a range of people across the North West, and we will continue to explore further partnerships in the future.



Raising awareness

Kidney Care UK

Since June 2023, we have had a positive and successful partnership with Kidney Care UK, working together to support people with chronic kidney disease (CKD). This partnership has significantly improved awareness of CKD and meant more people are registered for Priority Services.

People with CKD, especially those who are having dialysis, face many challenges including reduced quality of life, difficulties staying in employment and a lower income. Kidney Care UK have also found that many people with CKD live in deprived areas. Our training programmes, which were developed with input from Kidney Care UK, have given our team a deeper understanding of CKD and how it affects people. This has improved our ability to support kidney patients effectively.

Our Vulnerable Customer Engagement Lead plays a crucial role in making sure patients across the North West are aware of the benefits of being on the Priority Services Register and can access our support schemes. We have strengthened this partnership by getting involved in fundraising activities, such as Wear it Blue for World Kidney Day, and taking part in the Great North Run. We are committed to continuing this partnership to improve understanding and support for people with CKD.



CASE STUDY:

Real stories, real impact: Our work with Kidney Care UK

We know that behind every name on our Priority Services Register there is a personal story. Sometimes, those stories are closer to home than we expect. We are based in the North West, as are all our employees and customers.

A relative of one of our employees has faced a lifelong battle with kidney disease. Megan spent much of her early life in and out of hospital as she was born nine weeks early with a condition that meant her kidneys didn't fully develop. At age 13, she received a life-changing kidney transplant from her dad, giving her the chance to live like a typical teenager. Megan sat her GCSEs and enjoyed the freedom she'd missed out on.

Sadly, in 2022, her body began to reject the kidney and it had to be removed. Megan now relies on dialysis three times a week to stay alive – a treatment that means her water supply is vital.

Through our partnership with Kidney Care UK, we were able to introduce Megan to a supportive community of young people facing similar challenges. After meeting the charity at our vulnerability summit, Megan attended a residential event hosted and funded by Kidney Care UK. This was an experience that gave her connection, confidence and hope.

Today, she is not only studying for a degree in Psychology, but she's also joined our Priority Services team, where we've tailored her working hours around her dialysis schedule. Megan's own experience brings valuable insight to our work, and her passion for helping others is a daily reminder of why our services matter.

"Since joining the Priority Services team, I've been lucky to meet some truly amazing people. When your career and passion come together, it really is the best feeling. I'm proud to work for a company that puts helping others at its heart."
Megan

Megan's journey is a powerful example of how partnerships, understanding, and flexibility can transform lives. It's also a reminder that Priority Services isn't just what we do – it's who we are.

Raising awareness

STAMMA

Our partnership with STAMMA, a leading authority on stammering since 1978, has helped us improve the ways we communicate. STAMMA has created awareness videos, featuring people’s personal experiences, for both our contact centre employees and engineers. These resources have been valuable in building a more inclusive and understanding environment for our customers.

STAMMA also takes part in our yearly vulnerability summit, supports us in raising awareness of our Priority Services scheme and helps raise awareness of stammering among our employees. This partnership emphasises our commitment to understanding and meeting the diverse communication needs of our customers.

STAMMA

CASE STUDY:

Giving voice to every conversation – Our partnership with STAMMA

We believe that great service starts with great understanding – not just of our customers, but of each other.

Our partnership with STAMMA, the British Stammering Association, began through the personal experience of one of our own employees. Living with a stammer, he recognised the opportunity to make a difference – not only for himself, but for our customers and teams across the business.

He reached out with a simple but powerful idea. By working with STAMMA, we could better support our employees when talking to customers who stammer and create a more inclusive environment for employees who do too.

Through this partnership, we have:

- led campaigns to raise awareness of stammering;
- shared practical tips and guidance to help employees feel confident and supportive in conversations; and
- published stories from our own employees in newsletters to help other people understand the reality of living with a stammer.

Our partnership with STAMMA has helped us build understanding, improve communication and make sure every voice is heard clearly and confidently.

“It’s not just about helping customers – it’s about helping each other. Sharing my story has helped me feel seen and I hope it’s helped others feel supported too.” Andy, United Utilities employee

By listening, learning and acting on new knowledge we’re making sure our Priority Services are inclusive, accessible and shaped by the people who use and deliver them.

Raising awareness



Warrington Disability Partnership

Our close relationship with Warrington Disability Partnership gives us vital insights into the needs of people living with disabilities.

As one of the main sponsors of their yearly Disability Awareness Day, we actively take part in community events led by the charity. This partnership allows us to better understand the unique challenges faced by people with disabilities, and provide appropriate support.



The Big Food Project

We have built a strong relationship with The Big Food Project, a charity dedicated to tackling food poverty.

Our team has volunteered at their food pantry and has seen first-hand the issues faced by people who are struggling to buy food. We have launched a campaign to include information about Priority Services in support packages from The Big Food Project to make sure vulnerable people are aware of and of our services and know how to access them.



Raising awareness

Working with stakeholders

Working with other organisations is essential to our plan to further expand and improve the support we offer to vulnerable customers. We use data-sharing agreements for customers with additional needs and work in partnership with other utility providers to help us improve our services.



Often, different utility companies (water, gas and electricity companies) in a region serve the same customers, including those in vulnerable circumstances.

Along with Electricity North West (ENW), Cadent Gas, Northern Gas Networks and SP Energy Networks, we have recognised that working together improves the overall customer experience. Working with other companies allows us to share the ways we each support vulnerable customers and provides the opportunity to save time, money and resources when putting in place customer support. In the North West, we share an ambition to support our customers and communities who are in extreme vulnerable situations. Paul Morris, Partnership and Community Manager at Electricity North West, said “collaborative working among utilities is undoubtedly the way forward, and we enjoy a positive relationship with United Utilities. All the projects we work on aim to enhance the customer experience we can provide, and we look forward to working on more projects in the future, which will benefit customers”.

As well as sharing best practice and working together, we have data-sharing agreements with Electricity North West, Northern Power Grid, SP Energy Networks and Lancashire Fire and Rescue. The agreements allow the organisations to share personal information when it is in the customer’s best interest. When a customer registers for Priority Services with one of the organisations, that organisation can share information about the customer’s water use through advanced data-sharing arrangements. This means that customers only need to register for Priority Services once (with any of the organisations). Our Priority Services team will tell customers about the data-sharing agreements when they register customers to the Priority Services scheme, and our welcome letters and leaflets provide information to make sure customers understand how they can opt out of having their information shared in this way.

Sharing information is a vital part of making sure that vulnerable customers are identified, supported and aware of the services available to them. We will continue to work with stakeholders across the region to agree further data-sharing agreements, including with housing associations, local authorities and emergency services. We are also working within the water industry in support of a central register of vulnerable customers, which will make sure everyone in the North West who needs extra help receives it.

We are working to improve the type of information we collect about our vulnerable customers, to consider both geographic and demographic factors (for example, where a person lives and how old they are). This will highlight areas and communities where customers who are the hardest to reach live. Rural isolation, cultural factors and high levels of deprivation can prevent vulnerable customers from accessing support. We will target these groups by working with trusted charities and organisations.

We lead the Affordability and Vulnerability subpanel of YourVoice, the Independent Challenge Group for the North West. The subpanel is attended and led by charities and voluntary organisations. Members come together to share best practice, personal experiences and the challenges faced by customers with additional needs. This allows us to adapt our services to make sure we are meeting customers’ needs the best we can and continue to improve our processes.

Every year we bring together partners, stakeholders and speakers from across the region, all with a common purpose of working together to support each other and customers with additional needs. At our most recent vulnerability summit, held in Blackpool, we focused on how we can successfully support vulnerable customers, particularly those who would be most affected by having their water supply turned off. We believe that by working together, we can make a change.

2025 and beyond...

Looking ahead: Evolving to meet changing needs

We understand that people's lives change – and so do their needs. The future will bring new challenges and opportunities, not only for the growth of our Priority Services scheme but also for the wider support we offer to customers across our five counties who may need a little extra help.

Our teams are committed to working with new technology and exploring new ways to deliver the best possible solutions. We already have several exciting initiatives planned, which are all designed to make sure we continue to meet our customers' changing needs with compassion, efficiency and excellence.

Strengthening our support by adding social workers to our Priority Services team

As part of our commitment to improving the support we offer, we're proud to have added two experienced social workers to our Priority Services team.

This is a significant step forward in how we support customers from across the North West who need extra help. These new roles will bring specialist knowledge, fresh perspectives and an understanding of vulnerability and social care. We hope this will help us to better identify, understand and respond to complicated customer needs. Our social workers will:

- **manage individual customer cases**, working towards the best possible outcomes;
- **work closely with other agencies and partners** to coordinate support;
- **bring new ideas and approaches** to improve our existing services; and
- **support employees across the business** with expert guidance and training.

This is more than just a new role – it's a new way of thinking. By including social work expertise in our team we're creating a more rounded, compassionate and responsive approach to customer care.

"This is a unique opportunity to shape the future of our service. Our social workers will help us build stronger, more responsive support for those who need it most." Jemma Houghton, Priority Services Manager.

This investment in people and our Priority Services team reflects our long-term vision to make sure that every customer who needs extra help receives it with dignity and understanding and gets the right support at the right time.

Building our understanding of mental health and vulnerability

We know that people can become vulnerable at any time for many reasons and that sometimes these reasons may overlap. That's why we're taking part in a programme with the Money and Mental Health Policy Institute, a leading charity focused on breaking the link between financial difficulty and mental health problems.

As part of this programme, we're carrying out a full mental health accessibility assessment of our services. This includes a detailed review and a written report that will help us understand how we can better support customers who may be experiencing mental health challenges.

By learning from expert knowledge and people's personal experiences, we're making sure our services are not only accessible but are also delivered with compassion, flexibility and understanding, especially for people who may find it harder to use support services or ask for help.

Using technology to better understand and support our customers

During 2025 and 2026, we're taking a significant step forward in how we understand and respond to our customers' needs. By improving our analysis tools and moving from traditional, people-led analysis to advanced, technology-led methods, we'll be able to identify trends and emerging themes across our five counties more quickly and accurately.

This modern approach will not only deepen our understanding of why customers contact us, but it will also help us identify people who may benefit from our Priority Services scheme. If a call agent doesn't immediately recognise that a customer is eligible for support, the



Water for the North West

Appendix: Minimum requirements

Plain English Campaign’s Crystal Mark does not apply to this appendix.

No.	Minimum Expectation	Compliance	Implementation	Monitoring	Targets
1.1	Companies should adapt their services to customers in line with any known extra help needs. This is especially important during times where there is increased risk of harm; for example, during incidents.	 Compliant	<p>We have adapted our services in line with known customers extra needs. Our services for customers include offering a range of communication channels including language translation, British sign language translation, large print bills, braille communications, talking bill services, prints on coloured paper. Customers are able to contact us in a variety of different ways including digital and more traditional methods. These include webchat, social media, WhatsApp, contact us online forms, email, telephone call, letter, face to face at community events. We ensure that when a customer may be impacted by an incident or supply interruption we communicate with customers in a variety of ways including warm call, email, SMS text and voice blast messaging. Our website will always be updated and is fully accessible to customers who are able to utilise recite me to ensure that the updates work for any individual needs. Customers on our priority services register are also able to provide a named nominee to act upon their behalf. If a customer has a nominee we will communicate with the nominated contact to inform of any incidents or outages. In addition to contact during an incident or supply outage priority services customers will receive a delivery of bottled water to their homes. We apply a tiered approach to this process to ensure that the most vulnerable customers are prioritised to receive bottled water first. When we do need to visit a customers home we offer services such as knock and wait and passwords to protect customers from any potential bogus callers.</p> <p>We’ve improved our Priority Services team by introducing two experienced social workers. These professionals bring knowledge and understanding, and can: hold in-depth, compassionate conversations with customers, attend site visits to better understand personal circumstances and carry out referrals and assessments to connect individuals with the right support. We have done this to make sure we’re not only listening to our customers, but also taking meaningful, tailored action to provide support to the people who need it most.</p>	Our performance in this area will be monitored through customer, stakeholder and industry engagement. We analyse complaints and insight data on a regular basis which helps us to review the success of our service delivery. We commit to maintaining our ISO BSI18477:2010 for consumer vulnerability to demonstrate compliance.	Remain compliant
1.2	Companies should ensure that the level and nature of support available to customers is presented in a way customers can understand.	 Compliant	The support available to customers on our priority services register can be accessed via a number of different channels including website, leaflet and is explained via phone call when registering customers. Customers will receive a welcome letter that outlines the services and these are available in our vulnerability strategy to be published June 24. Our priority services teams are available 365 days per year 24 hours per day and customers have a dedicated phone line to enable them to contact one of our team who discuss any part of the service. We are one of the first companies to achieve BSI18477:2010 accreditation for our vulnerable customer support services including the need to ensure communications and services are accessible.	Our performance in this area will be monitored through customer, stakeholder and industry engagement. We analyse complaints and insight data on a regular basis which helps us to review the success of our service delivery. We commit to maintaining our ISO BSI18477:2010 for consumer vulnerability to demonstrate compliance.	Remain compliant

Extra help when you need it most

No.	Minimum Expectation	Compliance	Implementation	Monitoring	Targets
1.3	Companies should seek to continuously improve the service they provide to customers who need extra help. This may include finding innovative ways to design or implement services.	 Compliant	<p>Although we believe that our services meet the additional needs of customers across the North West we work to continuously improve services reducing the burden of effort on customers, embracing new technologies and engaging with communities to understand developments in the needs of the customers we serve. To support this approach we recognise sharing best practice is key and hold annual Vulnerability Summits which give us an opportunity to share with key stakeholders across the charitable sector, local authorities, and vulnerability groups what we are doing at United Utilities to support vulnerable customers. The event is an open forum for industry leaders across the North West to come together, to share challenges, develop ideas and create solutions to support customers across the region. We lead the Affordability and Vulnerability subpanel of YourVoice, the Independent Challenge Group for the North West and are active members of groups such as the Collaboration Network and Staying Connected. These groups allow charities and other organisations to come together to share best practice, personal experiences and the challenges faced by customers living with additional needs. This allows us to adapt our services to make sure we are meeting customers’ needs the best we can and continue to improve our processes.</p> <p>We’ve improved our Priority Services team by introducing two experienced social workers. These professionals bring knowledge and understanding, and can: hold in-depth, compassionate conversations with customers, attend site visits to better understand personal circumstances and carry out referrals and assessments to connect individuals with the right support. We have done this to make sure we’re not only listening to our customers, but also taking meaningful, tailored action to provide support to the people who need it most.</p>	We will ensure that all of our innovations in this area are fed through our stakeholder panels, customer groups and test users.	Remain compliant
1.4	Companies should use a range of data to monitor the effectiveness of their extra help services, and the satisfaction levels of customers who have made such needs known.	 Compliant	<p>Its really important that we understand the customers we serve. We value customers feedback and use it to improve our services. We have contacted over 95,000 customers in our research to help build our future business plan for 2025 to 2030, its clear that customers want us to improve our services, for them and the environment. Our research included a wide range of vulnerable customers so we considered different factors of vulnerability, including financial circumstances, medical needs, age and language barriers and deigned our research to be representative and accessible. We also have a number of internal measures in place within our company to help us understand and monitor our services, performance and customer satisfaction. Measures we use to monitor our services and customer satisfaction include: feedback from customers through the rant and rave surveys, customer satisfaction surveys, feedback after incidents and complaints analysis.</p>	Our performance in this area will be monitored through customer, stakeholder and industry engagement. We analyse complaints and insight data on a regular basis which helps us to review the success of our service delivery. We commit to maintaining our ISO BSI18477:2010 for consumer vulnerability to demonstrate compliance.	Remain compliant

Extra help when you need it most

No.	Minimum Expectation	Compliance	Implementation	Monitoring	Targets
2.1	<p>Companies should interact with customers in a way that is inclusive for a diverse range of audiences. This should be underpinned by relevant insights, which may include research, engagement and accreditation.</p>	 Compliant	<p>Our services for customers include offering a range of communication channels including language translation, British sign language translation, large print bills, braille communications, talking bill services, prints on coloured paper. Customers are able to contact us in a variety of different ways including digital and more traditional methods. These include webchat, social media, WhatsApp, contact us online forms, email, telephone call, letter, face to face at community events. We ensure that when a customer may be impacted by an incident or supply interruption we communicate with customers in a variety of ways including warm call, email, SMS text and voice blast messaging. Our website will always be updated and is fully accessible to customers who are able to utilise recite me to ensure that the updates work for any individual needs. Customers on our priority services register are also able to provide a named nominee to act upon their behalf. If a customer has a nominee we will communicate with the nominated contact to inform of any incidents or outages. In addition to contact during an incident or supply outage priority services customers will receive a delivery of bottled water to their homes. We are Shaw Trust and Crystal Mark accredited and our website promotes the use accessibility tools. Although we believe that our services meet the additional needs of customers across the North West we work to continuously improve services reducing the burden of effort on customers, embracing new technologies and engaging with communities to understand developments in the needs of the customers we serve. Its really important that we understand the customers we serve. We value customers feedback and use it to improve our services. We have contacted over 95,000 customers in our research to help build our future business plan for 2025 to 2030, its clear that customers want us to improve our services, for them and the environment. Our research included a wide range of vulnerable customers so we considered different factors of vulnerability, including financial circumstances, medical needs, age and language barriers and deigned our research to be representative and accessible.</p>	<p>We will continue to hold accreditations from Shaw Trust and Crystal mark and ensure our website remains accessible. We commit to maintaining our ISO BSI18477:2010 for consumer vulnerability to demonstrate compliance.</p>	<p>Remain compliant</p>
2.2	<p>Companies should offer their customers a range of ways to interact and communicate. This includes allowing customers to opt for third party billing where appropriate.</p>	 Compliant	<p>Customers are able to contact us in a variety of different ways including digital and more traditional methods. These include webchat, social media, WhatsApp, contact us online forms, email, telephone call, letter, face to face at community events. We ensure that when a customer may be impacted by an incident or supply interruption we communicate with customers in a variety of ways including warm call, email, SMS text and voice blast messaging. Our website will always be updated and is fully accessible to customers who are able to utilise recite me to ensure that the updates work for any individual needs. Our dedicated priority services teams are available 365 days a year 24 hours per day so we are always on hand to support customers. The teams are trained to understand the needs of customers and identify people who may need a bit of extra help. Customers on our priority services register are also able to provide a named nominee to act upon their behalf. If a customer has a nominee we will communicate with the nominated contact to inform of any incidents or outages. If a customer has a nominee we will communicate with the nominated contact to inform of any incidents or outages.</p>	<p>Our performance in this area will be monitored through customer, stakeholder and industry engagement. We conduct regular reviews with third party suppliers to ensure compliance. The quality of the service provided by our internal teams is closely monitored.</p>	<p>Remain compliant</p>

Extra help when you need it most

No.	Minimum Expectation	Compliance	Implementation	Monitoring	Targets
2.3	Companies should consult with CCW, and engage with stakeholders and other customer representatives, when making significant changes to their proposed service offering around vulnerability.	 Compliant	We consult with the Consumer Council for Water and stakeholders when making significant changes to proposed service offerings. We utilise our your voice panel, in the flow customer panel and affordability and vulnerability panels alongside partnerships and stakeholder engagement across the vulnerability sector on a regular basis providing updates and seeking feedback on any proposals for change. We have a specific Affordability & Vulnerability Independent Challenge Group that consists of representatives from other utilities, charities, debt advice organisations. The group meets quarterly to share insight from their sectors and we work collaboratively to identify examples of good practice, co-create solutions, work together on joint branded initiatives and review any new propositions that we are considering.	We will demonstrate compliance through a robust tracking of governance across our external panels in this area.	Remain compliant
3.1	Companies should take active steps to identify customers who require extra help who have not yet been identified.	 Compliant	We have specific roles in order to engage with customers out in the community in the form of engagement and outreach teams, these roles attend a variety of community events across the region often in harder to reach communities building relationships, trust and promotion of priority services. Alongside community events we work closely with leaders in the vulnerability area to promote services via campaigns such as pharmacy bags and all together now newspaper. We actively create partnerships across the region with charities, local authorities and NHS teams to support in identifying customers who may benefit from extra help. These partnerships have included a train the trainer rollout programme to customer facing employees of those organisations to support in identifying additional needs. Our teams are trained to understand the needs of customers and identify people who may need a bit of extra help. Our partnerships with organisations such as the Samaritans, Dementia UK and MIND give our teams extra skills which help them feel more confident dealing with different situations, and promoting our values.	We will monitor compliance against the priority services reach which we have proposed to reach 25% by 2030.	Remain compliant
3.2	Companies should take steps to proactively increase customer awareness of the extra help available to those who need it.	 Compliant	In order to proactively increase customer awareness of the extra help available we utilise a number of channels including website and social media promotion, community promotion, sponsorship of vulnerability events including Disability Awareness Day. We have also worked with partners across the region to target communications to groups including new parents and dialysis patients. We promote our services via our bills and incident proactive communications.	We will monitor compliance annually against the awareness of our priority services scheme in the CCW (consumer council for water) water matters report.	Remain compliant
3.3	Companies should train their employees to spot potential requirements for extra help, even when a customer has not previously declared it.	 Compliant	Our teams are trained to understand the needs of customers and identify people who may need a bit of extra help. Our partnerships with organisations such as the Samaritans, Dementia UK and MIND give our teams extra skills which help them feel more confident dealing with different situations, and promoting our values.	We will monitor compliance against the priority services reach which we have proposed to reach 25% by 2030. Additional internal quality monitoring will identify any additional training needs.	Remain compliant

Extra help when you need it most

No.	Minimum Expectation	Compliance	Implementation	Monitoring	Targets
3.4	Companies should actively consider how they can reduce communication burdens on customers who need extra help; this could include establishing data sharing arrangements with partner organisations.	 Compliant	As well as sharing best practice and working together, we have data sharing agreements with Electricity North West, Northern Power Grid, SP Energy Networks and Lancashire Fire and Rescue. The agreements allow the organisations to share personal information when it is in the customers best interest. Sharing information is a vital part of making sure that vulnerable customers are identified, supported and aware of the services available to them.	We will continue to hold current data sharing agreements and will explore further opportunities to collaborate.	Remain compliant
4.1	Companies should take appropriate steps to record customers' extra help needs. These records should be held securely and in line with wider data protection requirements.	 Compliant	We record customers extra help needs utilising our internal systems, allowing colleagues to understand both the need and the services required by customers. All of our data is held in accordance with GDPR (general data protection regulation).	We will continue to hold all of our data in accordance with GDPR (general data protection regulation)	Remain compliant
4.2	Companies' records should be reviewed regularly to ensure they are up to date.	 Compliant	We contact our customers every two years to make sure their needs and contact details are up to date in our records. To make sure our colleagues are fully equipped in recognising customers additional needs we have updated our internal systems to support this.	We will monitor our performance against targets around attempt and successful contact of customers on the priority services register after two years.	Remain compliant
4.3	Companies should consider how their records of customers' needs can be designed in a way that can help deliver wider benefits to their customers; for example, reducing communication burdens for customers through data sharing.	 Compliant	It is important that once we are aware that a customer requires additional help it is easy for all colleagues to access this information to provide the support required. In order to do this we record customers extra help needs utilising our internal systems, allowing colleagues to understand both the need and the services required by customers. In addition we have established data sharing agreements with the energy sector supporting a tell us once approach.	We will continue to hold current data sharing agreements and will explore further opportunities to collaborate.	Remain compliant

Extra help when you need it most

No.	Minimum Expectation	Compliance	Implementation	Monitoring	Targets
4.4	In designing their approach to recording and, where relevant, sharing customer vulnerability data, companies should clearly explain to customers how their data will be used, including any choices available to them. Companies should take steps to understand how their customers who need extra help feel about the use of their data.	 Compliant	We ensure that our customers are aware of our privacy policy once registered. When we collect, use and share the information we need a lawful genuine interest and reason to do so. We use a lawful purpose of 'substantial public interest'. This allows us to put the interests of our customers first, and we are allowed to accept registrations from third parties on your behalf or send to appropriate 3rd parties. Customers have the option to discuss any concerns around data with us and always have the option to opt out.	We will continue to hold all of our data in accordance with GDPR (general data protection regulation)	Remain compliant
5.1	Companies should develop and maintain a vulnerability strategy setting out how they plan to support the extra help needs of their customer base.	 Compliant	We have developed a vulnerability strategy in which we set out our plans for supporting customers across the region. Our strategy addresses identifying customers, what services customers can expect and our future commitments. In developing our strategy we have engaged with customers and stakeholders across the region seeking feedback and input into its development.	We will review our vulnerability strategy annually.	Remain compliant
5.2	Companies should take steps to understand the likely underlying requirements for extra help in their areas.	 Compliant	Understanding and engaging with our region is a really important success factor for our vulnerability services. We have built a wide range of stakeholders which provide an invaluable insight into the communities we serve. We utilise geographic mapping of our priority services register to identify gaps in communities and overlay this with research conducted to understand the aging population and growth in extra help requirements.	Our performance in this area will be monitored through customer, stakeholder and industry engagement. We analyse complaints and insight data on a regular basis which helps us to understand underlying requirements. We will continue to hold current data sharing agreements and will explore further opportunities to collaborate.	Remain compliant

Appendix: Our initiatives

Plain English Campaign's Crystal Mark does not apply to this appendix.

Initiative Name	Status	Description	Customer Group	Customer Benefit	Outcomes/Impacts
Bespoke Welcome Letter for Priority Services Customers	In progress	Developing a tailored welcome letter for customers joining the Priority Services Register, personalised to reflect their specific needs and available services.	All new Priority Services customers	Clearer understanding of available support, more relevant and reassuring communication.	Improved customer onboarding experience, increased awareness and uptake of relevant services.
Accreditation with Money & Mental Health Policy Institute	In progress (Spring/ Summer 2025)	Working towards formal accreditation to improve support for customers with mental health challenges.	Customers experiencing mental health difficulties	Enhanced trust, tailored support, and improved accessibility to services	Strengthened internal processes, increased employee awareness, and improved customer experience.
Social Workers in our Priority Services Team	Live (June 2025)	Introducing two new social worker roles within the Priority Services team to provide specialist support for vulnerable customers.	Customers with complex needs, including mental health, financial hardship, or safeguarding concerns	More holistic, empathetic support tailored to individual circumstances.	Improved outcomes for vulnerable customers, better signposting to external services, reduced repeat contact
Emergency Sewer Flooding Fund	Live (Launched April 2025)	Launched a dedicated fund to provide immediate financial and practical support to customers affected by sewer flooding incidents.	Customers impacted by sewer flooding, especially vulnerable households	Faster recovery, reduced stress, and financial relief during emergencies.	Improved customer trust and resilience, quicker resolution of hardship cases.
Emotional Wellbeing Support Following Flooding	Ongoing (case by case)	In recognition of the lasting emotional impact that flooding can cause, we have in some cases offered tailored mental health support, including counselling, to customers most affected.	Customers experiencing emotional distress following flooding incidents	Timely access to specialist emotional support, reassurance and care during vulnerable periods	Greater emotional resilience among affected customers, improved wellbeing, and stronger trust in our response and support mechanisms.
Increased Financial Support	Ongoing / Planned Expansion	We offer a range of affordability schemes to help customers manage their water bills, including discounted tariffs and debt matching programs. We are doubling our affordability assistance to £525 million, supporting one in six customers who may be struggling to pay.	Financially vulnerable customers	Greater access to financial support, reduced financial stress, and improved ability to manage household bills.	Increased uptake of affordability schemes, reduced debt levels, and improved customer satisfaction and trust.
WhatsApp Contact Channel	Live (Launched Jan 2025)	Introduced WhatsApp as a new digital contact channel to improve accessibility and convenience.	All customers, especially digitally engaged	Easier, faster communication with customer services through a familiar platform.	Increased engagement, reduced call volumes, improved customer satisfaction.

Extra help when you need it most

Initiative Name	Status	Description	Customer Group	Customer Benefit	Outcomes/Impacts
Online bereavement form	Live (January 2025)	Introduced an online bereavement form to provide customers with an alternative to calling when notifying us of a bereavement. This offers a more accessible and sensitive option for those who may find phone conversations difficult during a difficult time.	Bereaved customers and their families	Greater flexibility and sensitivity in how customers can notify us of a bereavement, reducing emotional stress and improving the overall experience.	Improved customer experience during bereavement, increased accessibility, and alignment with customer preferences for digital options.
Enhanced family support	Live (Enhanced December 2024)	Expanded the eligibility criteria for Priority Services support from families with children aged 12 months and under to include families with children aged 5 years and under.	Families with children aged 5 years and under	Broader access to support services for families with young children, helping to meet a wider range of needs during early childhood.	Increased support coverage, improved customer satisfaction, and better alignment with the needs of families during formative years.
STAMMA Affiliation and Awareness	Ongoing (Launched November 2024)	Affiliated with STAMMA to raise awareness and improve support for individuals who stammer. Activities have included featuring in STAMMA's newsletter to promote Priority Services, running awareness campaigns, and sharing employee support and training videos created by STAMMA.	Individuals who stammer and employees supporting them	Increased visibility and understanding of stammering, leading to more inclusive and empathetic customer service experiences.	Enhanced employee awareness, improved communication experiences for customers who stammer, and strengthened partnerships with advocacy organisations.
Sign Solutions – InterpretersLive!	Live (Launched 22 July 2024)	Partnership with Sign Solutions to provide on-demand access to a registered British Sign Language interpreters via our website.	Deaf customers who use BSL as a primary language	Enables direct communication with Priority Services through a BSL interpreter, improving accessibility and independence	Improved customer experience and accessibility for BSL users; increased inclusivity
Safe Spaces Campaign	Live (Launched July 2024)	United Utilities joined the national Safe Spaces campaign to support victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence. The initiative includes a dedicated section on the UU website with discreet access to resources, advice, and emergency contact information.	Individuals experiencing domestic abuse or sexual violence	Provides a safe, discreet way to access critical support without leaving a digital trace, empowering vulnerable individuals to seek help safely.	Increased accessibility to life-saving resources, enhanced safeguarding measures, and alignment with national efforts to support vulnerable individuals.

Extra help when you need it most

Initiative Name	Status	Description	Customer Group	Customer Benefit	Outcomes/Impacts
Incident Response Review	Ongoing	A comprehensive review of our incident response processes to ensure they are inclusive, responsive, and aligned with the needs of Priority Services customers during service disruptions or emergencies.	All Priority Services customers, especially those with additional needs during incidents	Improved communication, faster support, and more tailored assistance during incidents, helping to reduce stress and ensure safety.	Enhanced preparedness, more inclusive response protocols, and better customer outcomes during service interruptions.
Partnership with The Big Food Project	Ongoing	Collaborative work with The Big Food Project to promote Priority Services through joint campaigns, event participation, volunteering at their food pantry, and awareness-raising activities.	Financially vulnerable customers and those accessing community food support	Increased awareness of Priority Services among hard-to-reach groups, access to support in trusted community settings, and strengthened community ties.	Greater visibility of support services, improved registration rates, and enhanced community engagement through volunteering and shared initiatives.
Train the Trainer Programme	Ongoing	Delivering awareness sessions about Priority Services to charities and organisations across the North West. The programme equips frontline employees with the knowledge and confidence to promote Priority Services to the vulnerable individuals they support.	Vulnerable individuals reached through partner organisations	Increased awareness and access to Priority Services through trusted community channels, leading to earlier and more effective support.	Expanded reach of Priority Services, stronger partnerships, and empowered third-party advocates who help drive awareness and registrations.
Partnership with Kidney Care UK	Ongoing	Continued collaboration with Kidney Care UK, enabling United Utilities to have a visible presence in renal units and engage directly with patients. This allows for first-hand conversations about Priority Services and how we can support customers with long-term health conditions.	Customers with kidney conditions and those receiving renal treatment	Direct access to information and support while receiving care, ensuring customers with serious health conditions are aware of and registered for Priority Services.	Increased registrations from a high-need group, improved awareness of support options, and strengthened relationships with healthcare partners.

Extra help when you need it most

Initiative Name	Status	Description	Customer Group	Customer Benefit	Outcomes/Impacts
Disability Awareness Day Sponsorship	Ongoing	Continued support for Warrington Disability Partnership's annual Disability Awareness Day as a principal sponsor, demonstrating our commitment to inclusion and community engagement.	Customers with disabilities and the wider community	Reinforces our visibility and support within the disability community, helping build trust and awareness of our Priority Services.	Strengthened community relationships, increased awareness of available support, and enhanced reputation as an inclusive service provider.
Community Outreach and Visibility	Ongoing	Continued presence and engagement in local communities through events and outreach activities to raise awareness of Priority Services and support available to vulnerable customers.	General public, vulnerable and hard-to-reach customers	Increased awareness and understanding of available support, easier access to services, and stronger community trust.	Improved visibility of Priority Services, stronger community relationships, and increased registrations from outreach efforts.
Affordability and Vulnerability Summits	Ongoing	Hosting annual summits focused on Affordability and Vulnerability, bringing together industry leaders across the charitable sector, local authorities, and vulnerability groups. The events feature in-depth discussions, networking sessions, and collaborative idea-sharing to improve support for vulnerable customers.	Vulnerable customers across all categories	Indirect benefit through stronger partnerships, improved service design, and shared best practices that enhance the support they receive.	Positive feedback from attendees, recognition of United Utilities as a leader in vulnerability support, and expanded networks to reach more customers across the region.
Collaborative Data Sharing with Key Partners	Ongoing	We've established full use of data sharing with key regional partners including Electricity North West (ENW), SP Energy Networks, Northern Powergrid (NPG), and Lancashire Fire and Rescue. This collaboration ensures that Priority Services data is used effectively to support customers during emergencies and planned works.	Vulnerable customers across the North West	Enhanced coordination during incidents, faster response times, and more consistent support across utilities and emergency services.	Improved customer safety and service continuity, stronger inter-agency collaboration, and more proactive support for those most in need.
Priority Services Verification Process	Ongoing	We proactively contact our Priority Services customers every two years to verify and update their information. This ensures we continue to meet their needs accurately and provide the most appropriate support.	All registered Priority Services customers	Ensure customers receive the right support based on their current circumstances, improving service relevance and responsiveness.	Maintains data accuracy, strengthens customer trust, and supports effective service delivery.