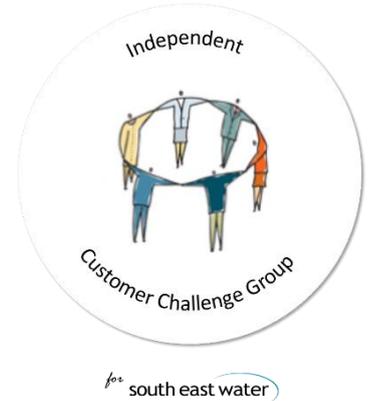


Independent Customer Challenge Group
for South East Water

Consumer Vulnerability Sub Group



Meeting number: 1

Meeting Date: 30 June 2017

Paper No: 2

Agenda No: 3

Title: Five out of Five Service for all customers: The Company's current services and approach to supporting customers experiencing vulnerability

Author: Simon Mullan

Purpose: To inform the CSVG on the company's current approach to supporting customers experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, vulnerability.

This paper contains commercially sensitive information, and is confidential to the Customer Challenge Group, and the Consumer Vulnerability Sub Group.

Five out of Five Service for all customers

The company's current services and approach to supporting customers experiencing vulnerability:



Vulnerability - our 5 underlying values

- We are committed to giving a 5/5 service to all
- We will deliver Highest Service at the Lowest possible Cost
- We will continue to tailor our approach to ensure all customers can access our services
- We will work with partners and other service providers to deliver 'Best Practice'
- We support our people to deliver the right outcome for our customers

vulnerability is a state, not a trait..."



Regulatory context

- No “contracts” with household customers
- Company licences require them to publish Codes of Practice, including a specific code covering procedures for debt recovery
- Guaranteed Standards Scheme stipulates minimum services, including response to unplanned interruptions to water supplies
- Companies also offer services for customers with additional needs – SEW’s now rebranded as Priority Services Register
- Pre-payment meters not permitted
- WaterSure scheme – national scheme, initially introduced as “vulnerable customer” Tariff
- Most companies operated trust funds for customers in debt
- Social tariffs were not permitted before 2015 – now allowed, with customer support
- Support for vulnerability will be formally assessed in PR19 business plans

Vulnerability – Our Values

Financial Support (affordability)

- Keep our bills as low as possible
- Flexible payment options
- Supportive and simple tariffs
- Customer metering programme
- Targeted segmentation

Access to our Services

- Priority Services Register
- Dedicated 'Customer Care' team
- Dedicated 'out reach' team
- Choice of communication channel -
Website accessibility
- Simple application process

Partnerships

- Trusted third parties - CAB, Age UK
- Community groups
- Working with other service providers
- Industry experts – Step change, RNIB
- Panels for additional support

Our People

- Leadership & culture change
- Trained staff alert to vulnerability
- Dedicated manager role for vulnerable customers
- Staff with empathy recruited
- CRM tools for 'key words'



Financial Support (affordability)

Affordability

- 98.5% of our customers pay – helps keep bills low for all
- Helping Hands social fund assists those unable to pay

Flexible payment options

- Working with DWP to receive payment through customer benefits
- Customised payment plans – all our payment options are free for the customer.
- We accept any amounts, any frequency, short term arrangements – all to suit individual requirements.

Supportive and simple tariffs

- Watersure – caps charges for those who need to use more water
- Social tariff – up to 40% off of our normal tariffs
- Single room tariff/Single occupier – discounts for those living alone

Metering programme

- Over 80% of customers benefit from having a meter
- Phase In option – for those higher users to help them manage through the change

Targeted segmentation

- Sharing data – to target the right support for those in need using our networks
- Obtaining data – from data warehouses, Experion, equifax etc



Access to our Services

Priority Service Register

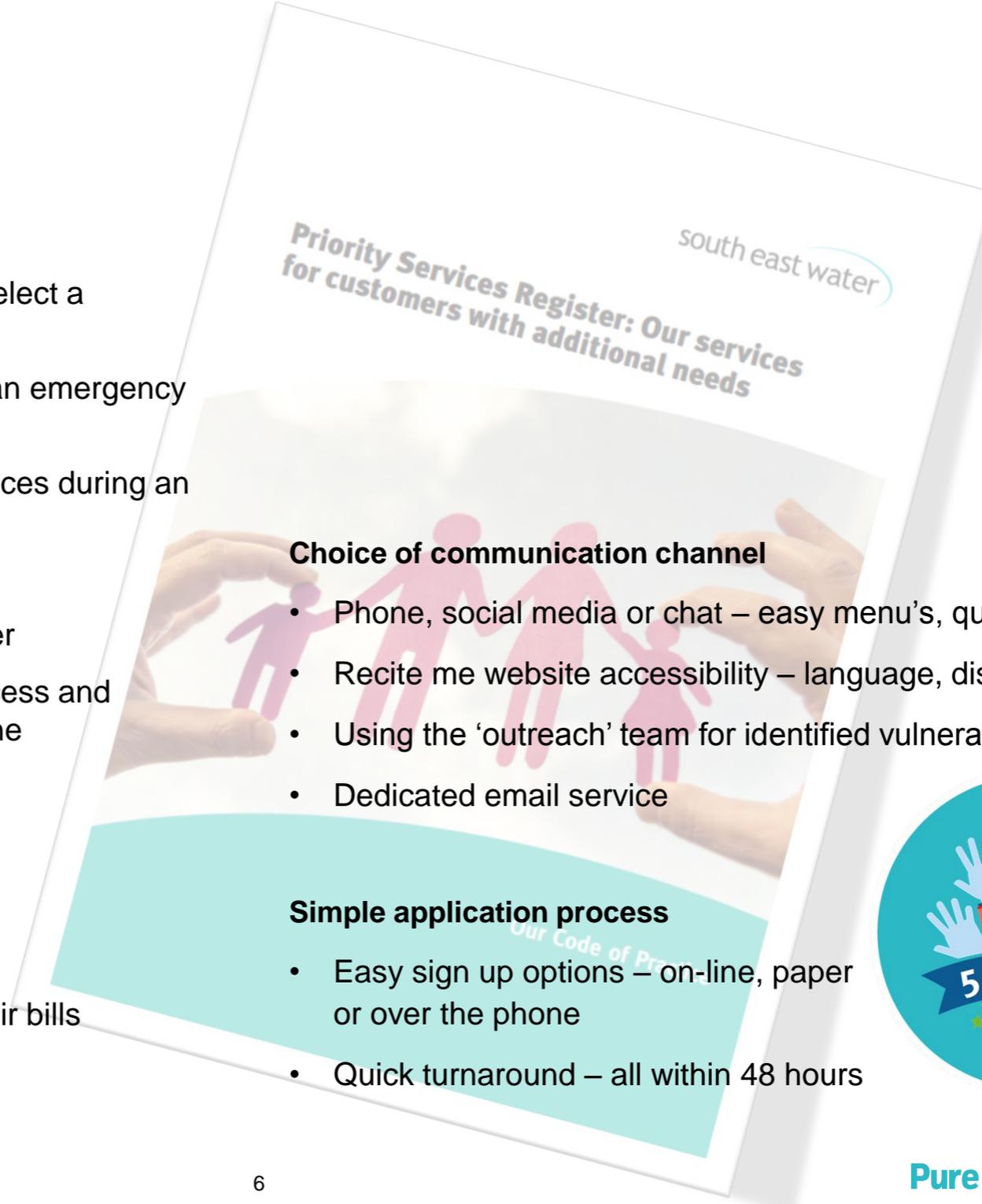
- A register for customers with additional needs to select a particular service
- Enables customers at risk to be contacted during an emergency or planned interruption
- Sharing local information with the emergency services during an incident

Dedicated 'Customer Care' team

- Running and advertising the priority service register
- Supporting customers through the application process and agreeing specific tariffs and services over the phone
- One stop shop from identification to application

Dedicated 'outreach' team

- Help with arrears and financial situations
- Communicating face to face
- Assisting with water meters and understanding their bills
- Maintaining and finding new community contacts



Choice of communication channel

- Phone, social media or chat – easy menu's, quick response times
- Recite me website accessibility – language, disabilities
- Using the 'outreach' team for identified vulnerability cases
- Dedicated email service

Simple application process

- Easy sign up options – on-line, paper or over the phone
- Quick turnaround – all within 48 hours



Partnerships

Trusted third parties

- Using our partners knowledge and networks to engage and promote with our joint contacts
- Local CAB focus groups – sharing experiences and vulnerability ideas
- Our contractor teams work with us on key customer programmes

Community groups

- Housing Trusts/Assisted Housing – building relationships to support new developments
- Attend local events in the community – high visibility at fetes, coffee mornings etc
- Parish councils – key contact regularly visited by our outreach team
- Foodbanks - accessed through local wardens

citizens
advice

Working with other service providers

- Not a water-specific issue – customers who are struggling to pay are likely to be struggling with other household bills
- Promoting best practice - companies and sectors all have similar yet different support
- Learning from energy providers ongoing work –aiming for one independent database

Panel for additional support

- Helping hands/supporting financial recommendations
- Financial inclusion partnerships– working together to support customers



Our People

Leadership & culture change

- Shareholders and investor buy-in – supported by our business plan
- Customer centric approach – ‘five out of five’ service for all
- Engaging the whole business in identifying and supporting customers who may be vulnerable

Trained staff alert to vulnerability

- Customer facing staff trained to look for signs of vulnerability
- New employees receive extra days training around the services offered through the Customer Care team

Dedicated manager role for vulnerable customers

- Recognition that vulnerability requires focussed commitment
- Targeted to find local community groups and forums to support our identification and engagement with vulnerable customers

Staff with empathy recruited

- Ensures vulnerable customers are positively impacted and not disadvantaged
- Specially selected team to identify transient vulnerability

CRM tools

- Main screen displays customers registered on PSR
- Looks for ‘key words’ and flags to agents



Summary

- Proud of our focus on customers with additional needs
- But we want to do more
- Learning from, and working with others a key theme for our development

A Five out of Five Service...

...for all customers

