



YorkshireWater

PSR Expert Evaluation Follow Up 2023

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**Background, objectives
& methodology**





Background & objectives

An independent panel of third party national and regional organisations and charities has been set up to review and assess YW's progress in terms of the services and support it provides to customers in vulnerable circumstances. YW have developed an assessment framework for the panel to use in order to gauge and measure performance based on expert opinion.

Objectives

1. Explore expert thoughts on YW as a provider of services to customers with additional needs based on understanding of YW's current service
2. To conduct an assessment of the accessibility of YW's service provision
3. To assess the types of services provided and how well they cater for the needs of all
4. To assess the effectiveness of services provided

Following a benchmarking piece of research with experts in 2019, experts have been consulted on an annual basis. 2024 will be the final year.

Methodology

Qualitative research

15x depth interviews via telephone or Teams video call.

Participants were sent materials and evidence to view in advance and discuss during the interview.

Interviews lasted around approximately **1hr 30mins**.

We spoke to **1x new expert** this year who hadn't previously taken part

Fieldwork conducted from 13th March – 28th April 2023

Who we spoke to

We spoke to range of experts from both local and national organisations; in order to protect anonymity we have broadly categorised the organisations spoken to in terms of the types of vulnerable circumstances the customers they support fall into. Some organisations cover multiple vulnerability categories.

Communication	x4	Ethnic minority	x4	Mental health	x1
Low income	x1	Elderly	x2	Physical disability /chronic illness	x7
Rural	x1	Young children	x1		

**Experiences of services supporting
vulnerable customers**





Examples of gold standard service for customers in vulnerable circumstances

There is a sense that it is becoming a greater priority for many organisations to consider the needs, accessibility and safeguarding of customers, particularly those in vulnerable circumstances. We have found that participating experts have been able to name more examples this year of where organisations are making positive changes and advances in the services they provide.

Utility Companies



United Utilities was mentioned as a leader in the utilities sector for community engagement and is targeting engagement to vulnerable communities / those who usually fall through the cracks. Anglian Water was also noted to be involving third-party organisations to reach disengaged communities.

Transport



British Rail have developed a mobile app which allows vulnerable travellers to priority book assistance for their journey – this can be an actual member of staff.

Hospitals



Spire Healthcare was praised for offering incentives for people with disabilities to use its facilities. It has also developed a framework to help make rooms and services increasingly accessible

Banks



Barclays Bank offer an efficient BSL service on their website that users find extremely helpful and user friendly.



Barriers to accessing services

Despite improvements from some organisations, barriers and frustrations relating to being able to access services for or on behalf of customers in vulnerable circumstances are still mentioned.

As a number of organisations try to improve and expand online services and contact options there is a sense of frustration amongst experts that this is being used as a reason or cost saving exercise to reduce the number of telephone and face-to-face services some organisations provide. The fear is that this works to alienate user groups who are not online, such as older people or those who struggle to communicate via text-based options.

The cost-of-living crisis has been sighted as one of the biggest hurdles for vulnerable people to overcome. Experts would like to see better communication from YW, and other service providers around what financial support can be accessed, and for this to be offered before a customer gets into debt.

Key frustrations...

'Scripted' / poorly trained call centre staff

Online only support

Poor signposting to accessibility services

Lack of information on what services are available to PSR customers

Complex menu systems

"I think anything that any organisation can do to guide them through the maze of difficulty in terms of how they connect and how they get access to the services that they need. I have been involved in this area of work for about 25 years and I have never known it as difficult for people. So most of my work has been in fuel poverty and energy poverty but the current circumstances are so much worse and I think people are more fragile about how they are going to live and cope."

Low income charity

**Views on Yorkshire Water and
proposed performance
commitments**





Perceptions of Yorkshire Water are generally neutral amongst experts

The one new expert we spoke to this year... hasn't had much contact with Yorkshire Water and doesn't have a strong opinion on the company, although they are impressed with how some individual cases concerning their members have been dealt with.

Overall...

- ✓ Two organisations report having had conversations with YW in the past 12 months about new initiatives to assist customers in vulnerable circumstances or promote the PSR.
- ✓ Experts feel as though YW has implemented the feedback from previous rounds of evaluations and that they're committed to further developing in this area.

Most haven't had much contact with YW but three organisations note having had a poor experience when helping support members access financial support services:

- x One organisation has recently been removed from the partnership scheme and feels as though Yorkshire Water is no longer committed to supporting their members.
- x An expert themselves noted experiencing poor customer service from YW in the past few years after experiencing a brain injury. They felt as though YW call-centre staff were not able to adapt to the individual needs/circumstances of this particular case.
- x Another organisation has found it increasingly difficult to engage with YW as a company over the past year, despite always having a high opinion of them and the work they do.



YW are still seen as one of the least problematic companies to deal with

As previously, many help their service users with various aspects of their day to day lives but in light of the cost-of-living crisis organisations are finding more of their time being used trying to support customers with issues relating to affordability:

Understanding bills & comms

Contact support with third parties

Help with day to day activities

Helping customers reduce bill or access any financial support they can qualify for

Key priority

YW are noted to be leading the way compared to other utilities such as energy and services such as telecoms and banking due to:

- ✓ Having a variety of contact and accessibility options that are user friendly with staff that are helpful
- ✓ Providing a number of services through the PSR (felt to provide a greater range of services to customers on the PSR compared to energy companies).
- ✓ Having a range of bill payment and support tariff options (although a number of organisations feel the support tariff options are not well signposted by YW at the moment).
- ✓ Being more flexible and accessible when it comes to allowing third parties and nominees handle complaints and queries on behalf of vulnerable customers.

But there seems to still be a disconnect between the services available and the successful and proactive signposting by customer facing staff - particularly when it comes to support tariffs which are felt to be more important now than ever with the cost of living crisis.

"My experience of Yorkshire Water has always been good because I am in their catchment area. When I have rung the staff have been brilliant, but it is getting the customer to speak to them"

Chronic illness charity



More experts are aware of the PSR due to the Cost of Living Crisis

The new expert we spoke to this year was aware of the PSR but not through Yorkshire Water and they were not aware of the extent of services provided...

Organisations still raise concerns that the focus for awareness raising appears to be largely targeted at an individual customer level and those who are most likely to notice or be aware of the PSR are unlikely to be those in most need.

Experts condone the continued efforts and importance YW places on raising awareness, especially as the demand for services increases. However, they stress the importance for Yorkshire Water to work more closely with grass-roots organisations and local charities in order to better target PSR awareness raising.

Organisations noted seeing information about the PSR in their water bills and on social media, however the majority of organisations which had previously taken part in the evaluation had not seen any information or promotion of the PSR from YW.

"I have certainly come across it on social media, and I remember receiving the information because our water bill came in a few weeks ago, and I am sure the information was on there."

Children & low income families charity

"It was utility companies in the North West that have kept us in touch about that and the only reason that we know about that is because of United Utilities, none of the other partnerships have told us about it."

Chronic illness charity



Experts appear to be more sympathetic to the challenges of meeting PC targets

There appears to be a little more acknowledgement this year in terms of the challenges Yorkshire Water faces in trying to get more customers signed up to the register and increase awareness. A few experts note the difficulties their own organisations have faced getting their members to register for services that will assist them.

The awareness of PSR target of 65% is thought to be ambitious (based on performance versus the previous year) but the proportion sounds 'about right' to most.

- Organisations accept that it can be difficult to increase engagement with these services as members may feel they are not relevant to them/support workers are unaware they can apply on behalf of those they support. In order to achieve the 65% awareness target in time YW need to involve more grassroots organisations as partners who can disseminate the information to those who need it.

10% of households on the register by 2025 is again thought to be a reasonable target but highly unlikely to achieve given the slow progress made since last year. However, organisations understand that there will be people – including some of their own members – who might benefit from being on the PSR, but for one reason or another, decide not to register. With this in mind, there are some additional questions raised:

- How can YW target those over 70 who – the majority of the time – do not feel eligible for specialised services?

95% satisfaction among PSR customers is thought to be achievable by some due to the current score but around half of organisations we spoke to felt the target was too ambitious

- However, questions are raised about the 'significant' drop in satisfaction witnessed at one point earlier last year and this raises questions as to what may be driving satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels.

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1. Assessment of accessibility of services

a. Channels available to the customer





The range of contact options available to customers is generally praised

Most are impressed with the range of contact options available to customers, with most feeling the options surpass most other service providers.

Drivers for higher scores

- ↑ A wide range of contact options available to suit most needs – with the extended hours of BSL interpreters & translation options being particularly praised.
- ↑ ReciteMe is felt to be really worthwhile and was mentioned as a positive method by the majority of organisations.
- ↑ Two way texting felt to be useful but has the potential to be expanded to a Live Chat option on the website.
- ↑ Call-back services are useful so long as there are sufficient SLAs in place to ensure a timely returned call (other organisations noted to not always call customers back in a reasonable time frame). Especially for neurodivergent customers who prefer having a specific time to work with.

Average score:

Good

4.13

(+0.2 vs.
2022)

Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Exceptional
0	0	2	9	4

"It looks very comprehensive to be honest, and I don't think you can really expect an awful lot else. Especially when you look down with the other support. Anything that isn't caught in the supply need seems to be picked up on the other support"

Communication charity



There is still some room for improvement

Although the vast majority are satisfied with the range of contact options available, some areas for improvement remain.

Drivers for lower scores

- ↓ **Slow turnaround to email:** email contact seems to be a favourite for many organisations as it is easily accessible by the majority of people but if YW don't have a Live Chat option (a suggested contact option by some organisations), the turnaround time needs to be reduced. Some suggested 72 hours maximum.
- ↓ **Many options focus on customers having the ability to get online still:** some organisations are concerned by the continued move towards online services, which are out of the reach of many of their members. Customers in rural communities, the elderly, the financially extremely vulnerable, Deaf customers, and those with certain learning differences could all (potentially) be excluded from online channels.
- ↓ **Lack of detail on language translation / BSL services:** it is not clear how a non-English speaking customer could request translation services, the language options available - this may put some off from trying to access the services.
- ↓ **More emphasis on phone communication:** Despite all the options given, organisations believe that speaking to an actual person on the phone is preferred by their members – particularly those who are older and in rural communities. Extending the hours of the PSR phone lines and increasing call centre staff were suggested improvements.

"It is almost too much, blinded by having too much information at any one time. People only want to contact Yorkshire Water when they have a problem, that is the same with all of the utilities, you only want to ring them when you have got a problem.

Communication charity



Email turnaround time and the addition of a Live Chat option are two routinely suggested methods of contact

Recommendations

- Go further on contact services for Deaf customers such as having initial text contact option (not just after calling)
- Consider having additional email support services in place / different SLAs for customers in vulnerable circumstances (e.g. responses within 48 hours).
- If a faster turnaround time for email is not possible consider an instant/live messaging service.
- Reduce the routing options when calling the YW phone line to make the method more accessible

"I love the call back. I think they had that before, but I think that's a really good thing. The two-way text is good. I think that's really good for people who will one struggle to speak but two, you know, like a lot of our young people with autism don't really want to talk. They are better on the phone than face to face, but they'd be better on text. "

Learning and communication charity

"I think that's pretty good, it's a lot better than a couple of years ago when we did it originally. I've noticed there are some new things added in."

Cognitive/Chronic Illness charity



1. Assessment of accessibility of services

b. Methods and Process for registering onto the PSR





The PSR form is seen to be accessible, and the details asked for appropriate

The repositioning of the PSR form on the website is thought to be a positive step, and the questions asked are thought to strike the right balance.

Drivers for higher scores

- ↑ The form is easy to find online.
- ↑ Organisations really appreciate the community engagement and many were interested in becoming partners themselves.
- ↑ Option for YW colleagues, family members or professionals to sign people up is thought to be great.
- ↑ A separate phone number is appreciated, and as long as customers don't have to navigate a complex call menu, is thought to be a good alternative to online.

Average score:

Good

4.06

(+/-0.0 vs.
2022)

Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Exceptional
0	0	2	10	3

"Takes two minutes on the website, it can't be too overly complicated can it. And if organisations can do it on peoples' behalf, that means I don't have hoops to jump through, I can do it for people who are not really tech savvy and can't use the internet"

Communication charity



Questions around likelihood to sign-up and potential barriers persist

Although it is now easier to find the form online, questions about whether customers are likely to have the awareness and ability to sign-up proactively are still raised.

Drivers for lower scores

- ↓ **No mention of forms being in accessible formats:** should be provided in large print, braille and should be able to sign up using BSL services.
- ↓ **Some question how likely truly vulnerable customers would be to sign up themselves – feel a more proactive approach is required:** Yorkshire Water should be looking at ways to sign customers up at every contact touchpoint or even consider going door to door to help sign up elderly customers.
- ↓ **Need to make it clear what, if any, evidence would be required to access PSR services:** One charity mentioned poor experiences of members struggling to sign up to support tariffs due to their inability to send in evidence of benefits –they felt that many customers will assume the same thing would be required for this and potentially put them off.
- ↓ **Increase community engagement:** as mentioned above, some organisations questioned if vulnerable customers would sign up proactively. Increase YW partners such as charities, social carers and support workers etc. who can register on their behalf.
- ↓ **Including information in the bill isn't always useful:** Many organisations noted that any extra leaflets or documents included in the bills are usually thrown away by their members, or not seen if the vulnerable person doesn't have access to their bills.
- ↓ **Not easy for a customer to know if they are signed up already or not – those with neurological conditions are likely to forget if they are on the PSR:** YW should find ways to remind customers that they are on the PSR.



Continue to focus on community engagement, and tweaking sign-up processes

Recommendations

Consider ways of supporting more customers to sign-up such as using every touch point with customers to identify needs and provide door-to-door services in areas where there is a much higher proportion of elderly customers to help sign them up. Additionally, increasing community engagement partners can enable more vulnerable people to sign up.

Consider ways of reminding customers that they are signed-up to the PSR such as showing it on their online account, reminding them verbally when a customer contacts them (use this as an opportunity to check needs are currently met) and show it on bills. Also providing an information pack about what services those on the register have access to so they can take advantage of those.

Provide detail on what evidence, if any, is needed to sign-up.

"Perhaps more community engagement, community engagement is on there. I have never heard care managers and social professionals talk about it. I still feel there is probably something lacking in that aspect."

Mental health charity

"It is good having it in with the bills, but people won't always be having access to the bills anyway. For instance, people who paid for the utilities as part of their rent, they won't see that aspect of things."

Disability charity

1. Assessment of accessibility of services

c. Identifying customers in vulnerable circumstances





A good start to raising awareness but more to be done

The actions Yorkshire Water have taken so far to help raise awareness of the PSR are felt to be a step in the right direction but without further efforts and increased investment many question how much more effective YW will be at driving much higher levels of awareness.

Drivers for higher scores

- ↑ Welcome the use of external training such as Dementia friends and Mental Health First Aid – feel the training is a step in the right direction.
- ↑ Good to see the increasing use of paid partnerships and linking with a greater range of organisations and increased community engagement.
- ↑ Social media advertising felt to be a good direction to take to help target younger customers.
- ↑ Data sharing is seen as a positive step to help those who typically fall through the cracks.

Average score:

Fair to Good

3.66

(+/-0.0 vs.
2022)

Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Exceptional
0	1	4	9	1

“Working with local authorities is really key, that is the gateway that most people will go through in terms of finding support at one point in their life... this is probably the best way in terms of identifying customers who might need the PSR.”

Partially sighted charity



Promotion needs to go further in order to get better results

Organisations still aren't often aware of seeing PSR ads themselves which often makes them question the effectiveness of the promotion. The training and partnerships in place currently need to go further and target a broader range of vulnerable circumstances.

Drivers for lower scores

- ↓ **1 initial day of training is not enough:** training at the beginning of a job is not felt to be the most effective way of ensuring staff effectively remember information provided or that they continue to expand their knowledge. An ongoing training plan is suggested, with immersive training provided by suitable charities for each vulnerability group that is repeated annually. One organisation suggested extending this training to engineers as they are most likely to be interacting with vulnerable customers.
- ↓ **Social media advertising is not sufficient:** many vulnerable customers are noted to not be active on social media and there were some concerns that the reach of the social media ad was not sufficient.
- ↓ **Paid partnerships and community engagement need to be more expansive:** Many organisations weren't aware of who the partners were and if they themselves were considered to be a partner organisation. Grassroots engagement such as this should be pushed further and be the main form of promotion.
- ↓ **Data sharing needs to be extended to more organisations:** Even though the concept of data sharing was viewed positively, it was suggested that this needs to be expanded to cover more organisations and charities.
- ↓ **Needs to be greater accessibility options for adverts:** one video in BSL alone was not felt to be quite enough – should have leaflets in different languages, BSL videos across all platforms, need to advertise on leaflets the BSL option and make it clearer who is eligible.



Invest in grassroots partnerships and further develop the staff training

Recommendations

Consider utilising advertising through more traditional channels such as newspaper, outdoor, radio and television – particularly community radio stations for harder to reach customer groups. These may also have a wider and more impactful reach.

Continue to expand the paid partnerships and community engagement as grassroots work is the most effective way to reach vulnerable customers.

Ensure that accessibility is continued into advertising and promotion, looking at different ways to be more accessible and expanding upon the one BSL advert produced and potentially having translated advertisements.

Provide a more extensive and on-going programme of training for staff. Consider paying charities to come in and provide immersive and interactive training experiences for customer facing staff.

“People appreciate more the community engagement. They get blasted with so much information through social media and emails and everything else, it is fighting to reach peoples’ notice.”

Communications charity

“There needs to be a bigger campaign for promotion on a bigger scale. They could look at newspapers or distribution of leaflets through the NHS. Possibly posters in community centres and libraries. They could do much more promotion through big charities than they are doing currently.”

Chronic illness charity

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2. Assessment of services offered

a. Services offered in relation to billing



Bill formats are 'good' for their clarity and ease of understanding

Most organisations find the bill format to be very clear and having audio options is felt to be an important service to provide.

Drivers for higher scores

- ↑ The bill design is considered clear and easy to understand for most.
- ↑ The balance between too much and not enough information is generally thought to be about right.
- ↑ Additional bill options are thought to be comprehensive by most.
- ↑ The main thing is that the amount is clear and easy to find – which it is.

"I am within the Yorkshire Water catchment area, so I think the billing has become much better, much easier, and much more understandable. I can't fault that to be honest"

Chronic illness charity

Average score:

Good

4.20

(-0.2 vs.
2022)

Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Exceptional
0	0	4	4	7



The format is improved, but some groups might still be excluded

Some groups of customers are identified as being 'missed' from consultation / consideration in relation to the current bill design and bill delivery options.

Drivers for lower scores

- ↓ **Colour schemes are still not ideal for partially sighted customers or those with learning disabilities:** needs to be a greater colour contrast and have potential bill templates disability tested.
- ↓ **Other audio options (aside from CD) should be considered since CDs are not well supported by many computers these days.**
- ↓ **Information and support for customers who are financially vulnerable is thought to be lacking:** some would like to see financial assistance information strengthened, and positioned alongside the PSR offer (separating the two can be overwhelming for some customers – especially those with mental health conditions).
- ↓ **Need to encourage customers to contact YW if they don't understand their bill:** it was suggested that some vulnerable customers may feel embarrassed to admit they don't understand their bill; a small message urging customers to get in touch if they don't understand could relieve some of this embarrassment.



Keep the general bill design – look at some further options for future proofing accessibility

Recommendations

The basic bill format is thought to be well designed and easy to understand, and aside from some tweaks around colour schemes is thought to be accessible for most.

However, there are some issues with the colours on the bill not being suitable for those with disabilities. It was also mentioned that bills could be in Braille to assist partially sighted customers. Experts suggested having the bills disability tested to ensure they're accessible to all.

Look at ways to better signpost customers to PSR or financial support information including QR codes for more tech savvy customers to further information.

Consider including a small line of text on the bill to encourage customers to call up if they have difficulty understanding their bill.

"One of the big problems for sight impaired people is the lightness of the print. A lot of them the print, light blue on white. And it's virtually impossible to see"

Partially sighted charity

"I am not sure there is evidence of innovation. I think what they offer is pretty standard for a utility company. I think that is what makes it good rather than exceptional."

Elderly charity

We understand some of these options may already be available but were not demonstrated in the evidence – these recommendations are based on the pack shown

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2. Assessment of services offered

b. Services offered in relation to the operational element





Operational services are rated highly by most

Most are satisfied with the operational services offer, but again, Deaf customers might be underserved.

Drivers for higher scores

- ↑ Services offered are seen to be positive and accessible for most user groups.
- ↑ Password scheme (if well operated) is a good idea.
- ↑ Nominee scheme is a great idea so long as it is accessible for charities to support members.
- ↑ Water purchase rebates aren't well known, but are seen as a good service to offer when needed.

"I think they are probably catering to most needs, but then we have got those categories where we know that Covid is still about. So when they talk about inspections and where there isn't any chance of passing anything on or protected because you have got people with no immune systems, that is not very clear."

Chronic illness charity

Average total score:

Good

4.13

(-0.3 vs.
2022)

Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Exceptional
0	0	2	9	4



Some customer groups might still be underserved under current provision

Although the majority are happy with the services in relation to the operational element of the business, there are still some concerns that Deaf customers, in particular, could be excluded from the services offered.

Drivers for lower scores

- ↓ **Contact options need to be more accessible:** YW need to provide additional information about these services and what is offered in BSL. Also the text option in a customer's first language was suggested.
- ↓ **Be clearer on how nominee schemes work and who can be a nominee:** assure customers that a non-family member or carer can also be a nominee. Also ensure that a nominee is not assumed to be a carer or referred to as a carer as this terminology can be insulting to those with a disability.
- ↓ **No mention of or signposting to financial support:** even if not part of the PSR services it is felt to be beneficial to signpost customers to any form of financial support in current times or providing support to help customers fix a pipe/leak that is their responsibility but cannot afford it/afford insurance.
- ↓ **Concerns that a password might not be easy to remember for those with cognitive conditions.**
- ↓ **More information needed on how customers can access the services:** Many organisations questioned how customers would access certain welfare services, in particular the home visits during a serious water incident.



Better signposting is the key theme for improvements

Recommendations

Enhance (or make clearer) the provision in place for Deaf customers in the event of a significant incident. Text messages will work for some (most younger Deaf customers who have had a hearing impairment since birth), but not for others (elderly customers who have lost their hearing in later life). Phone calls to PSR customers are impractical / not possible, so other methods are required such as BSL video calls. Additionally, look at providing the text option in the first language of the vulnerable customer.

Where there is an account nominee, make clear who the call goes to in the event of a significant incident, and have (clear) provision in place for customer support where the account nominee isn't able / available to assist. Be careful when using the term 'carer'.

Look at ways of making the password provided easy to remember such as texting a customer to remind them of their password shortly before a visit or an inward facing door sticker.

Inform customers of what services they are eligible for when they are registering for the PSR, what is an automatic response to an incident and what is something they will need to request from YW.

"You might just put a line in to say if you have difficulty understanding English, please contact this number, and then you'd have somebody available who could speak to them in that language. It's not that they're looking for the whole thing to be in a different language, it's just something that gives them a little indication that if they wish, they can contact you."

Ethnic Minority charity



2. Assessment of services offered

c. Proposed service levels offered to customers on the PSR



SLAs for PSR customers are thought to be sufficient

The majority of the SLAs are thought to be positive, and probably in-line with what Yorkshire Water can practically offer.

Drivers for higher scores

- ↑ Constant supply and bottled water targets in particular are thought to be adequate.
- ↑ In-person welfare checks are appreciated as some customers can feel very overwhelmed during these sorts of incidents.
- ↑ Good that YW are setting themselves targets for service levels in these areas.

"I can't imagine how they could decrease the response time; they have to mobilise people and get them there. Yorkshire is a big place so the targets are probably realistic, and they likely manage to exceed them most of the time"

Learning difficulties and communication charity

Average score:

Fair to Good

3.86

(-0.1 vs.
2022)

Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Exceptional
0	0	3	11	1



Door card drops not sufficient for all or sufficient notice for all

Some specific suggestions relating to particular customer groups are made as well as some more general queries.

Drivers for lower scores

- ↓ **Some waiting times for services are too long:** Some organisations suggested that the waiting times for the provisions are too long and should be maximum 3 hours for vulnerable customers reliant on water.
- ↓ **Customers who don't speak English as a first language could miss door drops (and other communications):** some provision for communications in different languages – perhaps via text – would be a good additional step for some.
- ↓ **A lack of clarity as to who is eligible for what service regarding bottles, constant supply etc.:** many customers will assume they are not eligible. Should also be available to those with learning and cognitive disabilities or those who may find a lack of constant supply very distressing.
- ↓ **Are there systems in place to give some customers more than 48 hours notice?:** some customers could have additional needs in relation to notification, e.g. would need to arrange to stay somewhere else, find a facility with disabled access to stay in etc. It was suggested to up this notice period to 72 hours.



Recommendations made on accessibility and timeliness of notifications as well as clearer eligibility

Recommendations

Aim to decrease the wait time of water shut off from 5 hours to 3 as these scenarios can be highly distressing for vulnerable customers reliant on water for health reasons.

Where possible (and where it is known that it could be needed) provide door drops/text notifications in different languages – or, provide a one line piece of information in key languages about where customers can go for additional support or information should they need it.

Where possible provide more notice to customers (ideally 72 hours minimum) or where not possible provide re-location support to those with physical and learning disabilities who are reliant on a constant supply.

Provide clearer and more inclusive information on who is eligible for constant supply making sure to include those with learning and cognitive disabilities into any explanations.

“The only area where I think there perhaps needs to be more input would be on welfare, where I think it is really important to engage with other agencies. Whether that be voluntary organisations, like Age UK or Citizen’s Advice, or caring and support agencies, local authorities.”

Low income charity



3. Assessment of effectiveness of services

a. The effectiveness of what YW are delivering to customers in vulnerable circumstances





Service effectiveness is seen to be generally fair but rated poor by some

Organisations identified that satisfaction scores alone, while positive, do not provide them with enough evidence on effectiveness alone.

Drivers for higher scores

- ↑ Some appreciate that the satisfaction surveys are undertaken, but there were worries about the inconsistency in measuring against the SLAs, particularly around deliveries, which used to be provided.
- ↑ The end result of 85% as a standalone satisfaction figure is seen to be very good.

"I think it is good that they are surveying three hundred every six months, and it is also people who have had an incident. So, it is real time information, isn't it, and three hundred is a reasonable sample"

Low income charity

Average total score:

Fair to Good

3.46

(+1.0 vs.
2022)

Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Exceptional
0	2	5	7	1



There are some concerns about water delivery targets not being measured

Many were disappointed to see that there was no data to indicate if YW were meeting their water delivery target.

Drivers for lower scores

- ↓ **Bottled water delivery target is too long:** The 5 hour target set by YW was felt to be too long by some organisations and there is no evidence to show if this has been achieved or not. This indicates a lack of accountability and monitoring of services.
- ↓ **The dip in satisfaction last year is concerning:** Many organisations commented on the significant decrease in PSR customer satisfaction which made them question if the services promised were delivered when needed at that point on the year.
- ↓ **Felt as though satisfaction alone wasn't a clear indicator of effectiveness:** Organisations would have liked to see how YW were performing with their bottled water service and the other services they provide – a performance average against historic performance data to show a trend is suggested.

"I remember from last time that their performance with deliveries was poor. If it was shown before it can be shown again, even if it needs a caveat to say 'this is only indicative data', I feel this is an intentional attempt to cover up poor performance"

Ethnic Minority charity



A clear plan to improve SLA performance is required, including providing more evidence

Recommendations

Improve bottled water delivery to be in-line with targets, some organisations suggested cutting the target down to a maximum of 3 hours.

Look at ways to ensure that PSR customers are truly prioritised.

Look at what is driving the increased lack of satisfaction amongst PSR customers, including those who rate 'neither/nor'.

Need to provide more information/data as satisfaction levels don't feel enough to determine how effective the service is. One expert suggested a Case Study in a YouTube video.

"I would probably prefer to have this information as a case study that gives more details into what happens and what YW did in that situation. Probably in the form of a YouTube video to actually explain it."

Cognitive disability charity

"It's much more difficult to reach rural areas in these sort of incidents but it's those customers who really need support as they can't just pop to a big Asda, they can be miles away. YW needs to have a solid plan in place to keep delivery times down in remote areas."

Children and low-income families charity



3. Assessment of effectiveness of services

b. Effectiveness in delivery based on complaints made by those in vulnerable circumstances





The largest proportion rate the complaints procedure as good

Most consider the complaints procedures to be in-line with what they would expect from a utility company and channels are accessible to the majority

Drivers for higher scores

- ↑ While it is disappointing to see strong levels of complaints from PSR customers a experts feel as though this indicates the accessibility of the channels.
- ↑ Channels to make a complaint thought to be sufficient for most (apart from Deaf customers).

"Once you tell someone they are a priority they are more likely to feel let down if they don't receive the service they anticipate and make a complaint. I suspect the reason they have a higher number of complaints is the fact they make it so hard to access tariff support. Staff need to be better trained to help guide customers through the tariff support process"

Communications charity

Average total score:

Fair

3.26

(-0.3 vs.
2022)

Don't know	Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Exceptional
0	0	1	7	6	0



PSR complaints are proportionally high

Most concerns stem from the fact that complaints from PSR customers appear to be proportionally very high, and many experts would like to see a more detailed breakdown of how many complaints are dealt with.

Drivers for lower scores

- ↓ **Complaints are high amongst PSR customers:** some experts believe this is reflective of YW failing to meet SLAs in terms of water deliveries but some do appreciate that customers who feel they should be a priority are perhaps more likely to feel let down if the service does not meet expectations.
- ↓ **There is no (obvious) mechanism for Deaf customers to complain:** as English is a 2nd language, many can struggle to express themselves in the way they would like when writing, so no clear option beyond email, letter or phone isn't sufficient (though the website includes the option to contact to make a complaint using a BSL interpreter, it's not thought to be especially clear)
- ↓ **No comparative data provided:** some experts felt they had to reduce their scores because there is no evidence provided to demonstrate a reduction of repeat complaints or reduction over time.
- ↓ **Turnaround time to respond to a complaint is too long:** The seven working day time frame was thought to be too long and some experts suggested cutting it down to a maximum of five working days.

"The complaints from PSR customers seems quite high. PSR customers are perhaps not getting as good a deal them. And there is certainly room for improvement"

Ethnic Minority charity

"I think there are, yes. if somebody wants to complain, they will complain really. There are three ways there which are quite adequate – email, telephone or written enquiry, the most appropriate ways really."

Partially sighted charity



Ensure complaint channels are open to all and that complaints data is comparable

Recommendations

Ensure the complaints process is open and visible to all customers. It's not made clear if a customer can complain using a BSL interpreter.

Improve the richness of data collection around complaints and provide comparative data. For example, show how many complaints are dealt with on average, how many were resolved etc.

Show the reasons why PSR customers are complaining and demonstrate how YW are using the findings from complaints data to make improvements.

Reduce the complaint turnaround time, potentially reduce to five working days as opposed to seven.

"A lot of people who are vulnerable are quite scared to complain, because they don't want to be earmarked. Sometimes they don't have the confidence to complain, to be honest. So you know, maybe somewhere there needs to be a statement that says that if you contact Yorkshire Water about something that you're not happy with, this is something that's welcomed, and it's not going to necessarily go against you."

Ethnic Minority charity



3. Assessment of effectiveness of services

c. Managing and growing the PSR while ensuring that customer information is accurate



The approach to managing and growing the PSR is thought to be about right

YW's processes for managing and growing the PSR, while ensuring that its customer information is accurate and up to date, is generally considered to be a good, sensible and proactive approach.

Drivers for higher scores

- ↑ PSR growth is increasing steadily and going in the right direction - but not quite meeting targets.
- ↑ The updated checking system is thought to be good due to the complexity of peoples' lives and how quickly circumstances can change.
- ↑ Not removing those who didn't respond to the checks is also seen as a positive, as experts knew many of their members would likely not respond to these checks but are still in need of the services.

Average total score:

Fair to Good

3.66
(+0.4 vs.
2022)

Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Exceptional
0	0	5	10	0



Despite the approach being seen as sensible overall, there are some improvements suggested

Organisations have some questions and suggestions about the monitoring and registering process.

Drivers for lower scores

- ↓ **Although gradual growth is positive, YW are failing to meet performance commitment targets:** it is suggested that YW need to revisit ways in which they are growing the PSR and make more proactive efforts through third party partnerships and put more funding into these – especially if they expect to meet their 2025 targets.
- ↓ **The customer contact process might need to be refined / revisited:** if contacted by telephone, not all customers will be able to talk and if by letter not all customers can read or write back. Do YW record if they need BSL support? Are customers contacted in a range of accessible options? Are YW keeping a record of which channels are providing the most results?
- ↓ **YW need to engage partners at the local level to help keep this information up to date:** organisations feel as though they can assist YW in keeping this information up to date as they are able to interact directly with those on the PSR or those who may need to be on the register.

"I don't want to unnecessarily mark them down, but there isn't clarity there. Actually, it would have to be a fair because it doesn't meet or exceeds the target for me."

Low-income charity



Adopt a tailored approach to re-contacting those on the PSR and look into why PSR awareness targets aren't being met

Recommendations

Consider the contact approach and whether it is suitable for all customers (and what alternatives might be possible), and consider the frequency of contact (e.g. might a person with a lifelong condition be contacted every two years?).

Look more closely at the reasons why PSR growth is not hitting targets and explore if some customers are aware of it but are for some reason reluctant to sign-up and the potential drivers for this.

Look at more proactive ways of reaching out to customers through increased use of partnerships in disengaged communities and at grassroots level.

"I think a lot of the people that we work with watch TV, it's worth looking at alternatives especially if you're maybe it's worth looking at alternative channels and whether there's any advertisement that you can do on there. There's also a number of community radios in each area it might be worth using the community radios to talk about what you do, maybe putting some kind of an advert on there."

Physical disability charity

"I think they're doing really well. Things have changed such a lot in the last four years. And the willingness to change and look at things. I think if they could do these few tweaks, it will be as good as it could get."

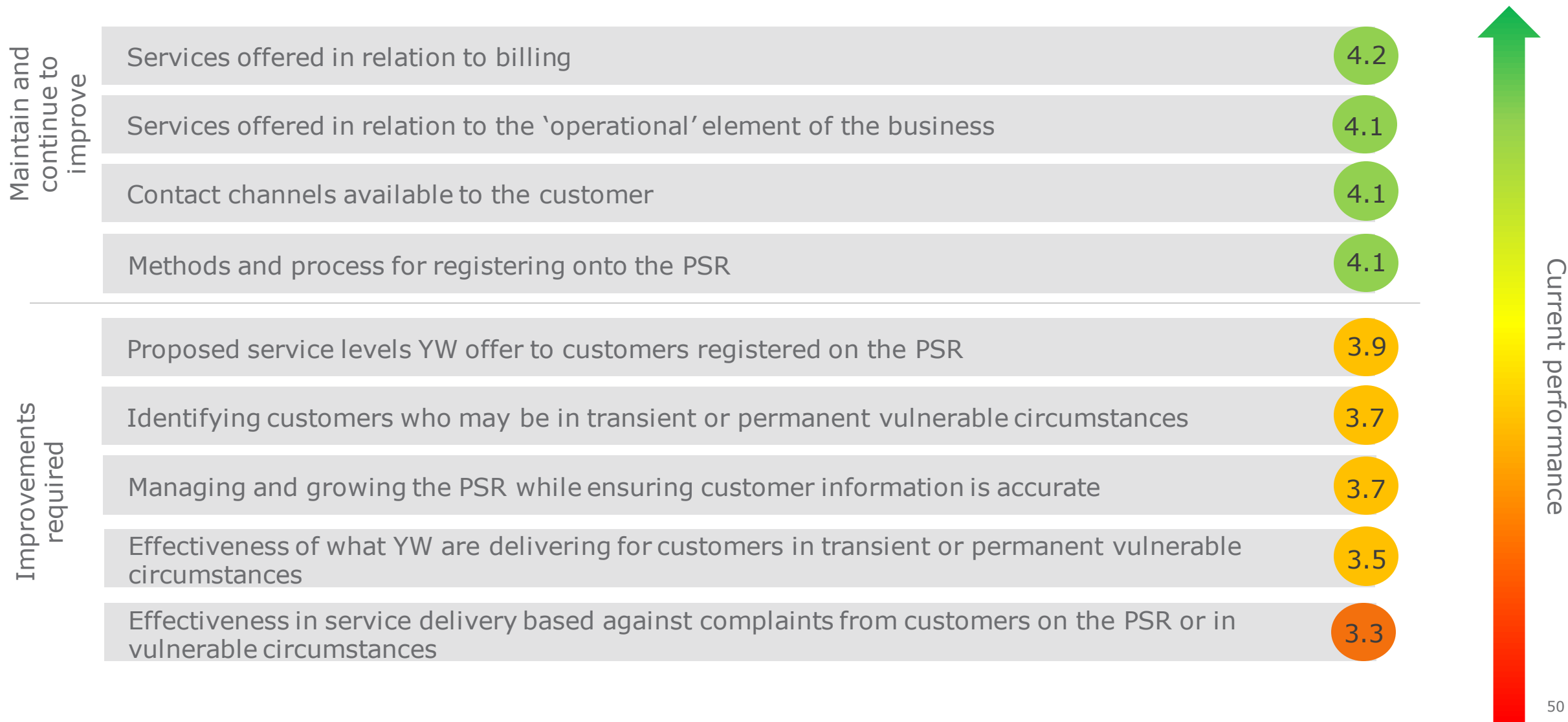
Disability charity

● ● ●
Conclusions and recommendations





Conclusions & recommendations





Performance vs. 2022 benchmark

	2023 mean	2022 mean (benchmark)	2021 mean	2020 mean	% change from 2022
Question 1a: how do you rate Yorkshire Water in terms of the contact options available to the customer?	4.1	4.1	4.3	3.5	+/-0%
Question 1b: how do you rate Yorkshire Water in terms of the methods and process for registering onto the PSR?	4.1	4.1	3.9	2.8	+/-0%
Question 1c: how do you rate Yorkshire Water in identifying customers who may be in transient or permanent vulnerable circumstances?	3.7	3.7	3.9	2.7	+/-0%
Question 2a: how do you rate Yorkshire Water in terms of the services they offer in relation to the 'billing' element of our business?	4.2	4.4	4.2	3.7	-5%
Question 2b: how do you rate Yorkshire Water in terms of the services they offer in relation to the 'operational' element of our business?	4.1	4.4	4.2	4.0	-7%
Question 2c: how do you rate the proposed service levels Yorkshire Water offers to customers registered on the PSR?	3.9	4	4.1	3.5	-2%
Question 3a: how do you rate the effectiveness of what Yorkshire Water are delivering for customers in transient or permanent vulnerable circumstances	3.5	2.9	3.5	3.1	+21%
Question 3b: how do you rate Yorkshire Water's effectiveness in service delivery based against their complaints from customers on the PSR or who were placed in vulnerable circumstances during a major water incident	3.3	3.6	3.9	2.2	-8%
Question 3c: how do you rate Yorkshire Water in terms of managing and growing the PSR while ensuring the customer information is accurate?	3.7	3.4	3.9	3.4	+9%
All questions (combined)	3.80	3.84	3.98	3.21	-0.04%



Conclusions & recommendations

The majority of organisations consulted are satisfied that YW has the necessary services in place to ensure that the people they work with and represent are able to access and use all of YW's services.

Accessibility appears to have improved in a number of areas, particularly for Deaf customers with the addition of BSL, and the additional translation services. However experts don't consider many of the methods to be innovative and suggest the addition of an online chat box, and ensuring that call centres are appropriately staffed.

Experts express the need for further promotion and signposting of the PSR, along with more proactive identification processes. Experts are satisfied that YW are trying hard to promote the PSR and the variety of methods added is well received. Given the ambitious target set for 2025, organisations feel YW need to go further in their efforts including extending the training programme to be delivered by charities working in partnership with YW, have the training take place yearly, and extend this training to engineers and ground staff. Further investment in the community engagement and in third-party partnerships would also like to be seen.

The operational PSR services provided are felt to be very comprehensive and the SLAs in place very good. However, where YW currently score lower is on the delivery of these services and the fact that SLAs are not being met, shown by the high number of complaints amongst PSR customers and the dip in satisfaction levels. With the growth of the PSR being a target for 2025, a comprehensive strategy needs to be developed so that extra service levels can be coped with.

Appendix





Organisation details/breakdown by reach

Charity type	Area/reach
Charity supporting Deaf people	Based in a major city
Charity supporting those with a specific physical and neurological condition	Based across a local authority area including rural and semi-urban/sub-urban areas
Ethnic minority charity	Based across a local authority area including mostly urban and sub-urban areas
Charity specialising in supporting people in a range of vulnerable circumstances but particularly those on low incomes	A UK wide charity but spoke to a branch/area of operation based in a sub-urban town, surrounded by a lot of rural communities
Learning disability charity	Based across a local authority area including rural and semi-urban/sub-urban areas
Ethnic Minority Charity	Based in a major city
Education institution and charity for the Blind	Based in a semi-rural community
Charity supporting those with a specific physical and neurological condition	A UK wide charity
A charity supporting those with a category of chronic/life threatening conditions	A UK wide charity
Charity supporting people with a range of physical and learning disabilities	Based across a local authority area including rural and semi-urban/sub-urban areas
A healthcare charity supporting ethnic minorities	Based across the whole of the North and North West
Organisation supporting rural communities/rural affairs	National organisation
Charity supporting people with a range of physical and learning disabilities	Based across a local authority area including rural and semi-urban/sub-urban areas
Charity supporting those with physical disabilities	Based across a region of Yorkshire
Ethnic minority charity	National charity but based in semi-urban area

For more information



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