

How we involve customers in our decisions

Helping shape the decisions that matter to you



YorkshireWater

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How to view this document

Contents page

Our contents page links to every section within this document. Clicking on a specific section will instantly take you to it.

- 1 Click on the contents button to return to the contents page.
- 2 This button takes you to the previous page.
- 3 This button takes you to the next page.

There are also many other clickable links within this document which we've made easy to spot by underlining and **highlighting** them in blue.

Accessibility matters. It's really important that everyone can navigate our report.

To help with this, we've taken steps to make sure this document supports accessibility needs:

- Screen readers will recite content in a logical order, as well as spotting headers and using different text for images.
- Compatible with text-to-speech programmes and Braille displays.
- Easy navigation with contents table and bookmarked links.
- Simple text structure with clear headings, paragraphs and tables.
- Comfortable colour contrasts.

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Contents

We've created colour-coded sections to help you to navigate this report easily. Just click on the section you are interested in on the contents page, and it will navigate you to that section.

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Why your voice matters

Water is an essential service – and unlike many others, you can’t choose your supplier.

That’s why we believe you should have a real say in the decisions that affect you.

We use what you tell us to understand what matters most, shape the decisions we make, and improve the services you rely on every day.

From what you pay, to how reliable your service is, to how we invest for the future and protect the environment, our decisions have a direct impact on your daily life. That’s why we believe you should have a real say in the choices that affect you.

We’ve always involved customers in the major decisions that impact them, including shaping our business plan. What’s changing is that we’re now being more open about how this works, and how your views influence what we do.

From April 2026, new requirements from our regulator, Ofwat, build on what we already do, by requiring us to clearly show how we involve customers in decisions that are likely to have a meaningful/material impact and how your feedback has shaped those decisions.

What do we mean by “material impact”?

By material impact, we mean decisions that really matter to our customers – where the outcome could make a noticeable difference to you, your community, or your services.

We use your views to shape important decisions



We Understand what matters most to our customers



We use these views when making important decisions



We learn from your experiences to improve our services

What this means for you

You can have a real influence on decisions about:

- How and when we communicate with you
- Where and how we invest in our services and infrastructure
- How we design and improve the services you rely on every day
- The support we offer and how we meet different customer needs
- How we protect the environment and plan for the future
- We’ll make it easier for you to share your views, and we’ll be clearer about how your feedback is used, so you can see the difference it makes.

How we put our customers at the heart of our decisions

These principles guide how we involve you in decisions – day in, day out, across everything we do.



What decisions do we involve our customers in?

Our customers have told us that not every decision needs customer input. But when something is likely to be meaningful or have a material impact, we'll involve you.



“The kinds of decisions that would matter most to me are changes to water bills, handling of leaks and outages, water quality standards and investment in infrastructure. These decisions directly affect everyday life, household costs, and reliability of service.”

Household Customer, Material Impact Research, May 2025

How we decide when to involve customers when assessing material impact, we consider:

- How many customers are affected
- How significant the impact is
- How long the impact will last
- Whether some groups are affected more than others.

How do we involve our customers?

As below, we use a mix of everyday feedback, research and independent challenge to make sure we hear from a wide range of customers. We involve the right people, at the right time – so your views can genuinely shape decisions, not just be added at the end.



Read more about what these are in appendix.

Our approach

This ensures that we can:

- **Accessible and inclusive**
- **Reflective** of different customer views
- **Independent** where needed
- **Timely** – so you can influence decisions before they're finalised.

What this helps us do

- Focus on the decisions that matter most
- Avoid asking customers to get involved unnecessarily
- Make sure we're using the right insight, at the right time, to shape decisions.

Independent challenge and oversight

We don't just gather feedback, we also make sure it's properly reviewed and challenged.

Our internal governance, including Customer Committees, checks that customer involvement is appropriate, robust and proportionate. Where needed, decisions are escalated to senior leaders.

We also have an independent group, the Yorkshire Forum for Water Customers, made up of customer and stakeholder representatives, which provides an external check on our work by reviewing how well we listen to customers and ensuring their views are reflected in the decisions we make and the plans we put forward.

This helps to make sure that customer views are genuinely built into decision-making – and that there is the right level of independence, challenge and scrutiny.

How we'll build this over time

We'll keep strengthening how we involve customers over time, so we can better reflect a range of views, demonstrate independence, and show the difference customer input makes.

Involving our customers at the right time, in the right way

Our approach is based on a few key principles:

Some decisions affect specific groups rather than all customers



We'll focus on involving the most impacted

Some decisions may be positive overall



But still benefit from customer input on how they're delivered

Trust matters



Where trust is lower, we'll involve customers earlier and openly

This approach helps us focus on the decisions that matter most - making sure involvement is targeted, proportionate and meaningful.



How we choose the right approach

We tailor how we involve customers depending on the decision, who it affects, and the type of input we need.

This means using a mix of:

- Everyday customer insight
- Direct engagement
- Independent challenge
- Internal governance.

This is so we can properly understand your views and use them to shape decisions.

Ensuring independence, challenge and a broad range of voices

It's important that customer involvement is not only heard, but also balanced, representative and open to challenge.

We do this in a number of ways:

Independent challenge

We work with independent organisations to provide external challenge in two ways.

1. Through the Consumer Council for Water (CCW), consumer panels and Customer Accountability Sessions provide oversight and feedback on our performance and provide actions which hold us to account.
2. Through the Yorkshire Forum for Water Customers, an independent group of customer and stakeholder representatives, which provides assurance on how well customer views are reflected in our plans.

External perspectives

We work with community groups, environmental organisations and those supporting customers in vulnerable circumstances - so a wide range of views are reflected.

Targeted and inclusive engagement

We involve the right customers for each decision, especially those most affected, so input is relevant, inclusive and representative.

Making involvement proportionate

We tailor how much we involve customers depending on the impact of each decision.

High impact decisions

When decisions affect lots of customers or involve significant change, we carry out more in-depth engagement.

This can include large-scale research, workshops and independent challenge. These decisions are reviewed by senior leaders and, where needed, our Board.

This typically applies to decisions that involve:

- Changes to bills or affordability
- Changes to service levels
- Major investment decisions
- Significant changes to our plans.

Medium impact decisions

For more targeted decisions, we focus on the customers most affected.

We use tailored research and engagement – for example, getting feedback during a local service issue.

Lower impact decisions

For smaller decisions, we use existing insight and data, unless more input is needed.

Involving the right voices

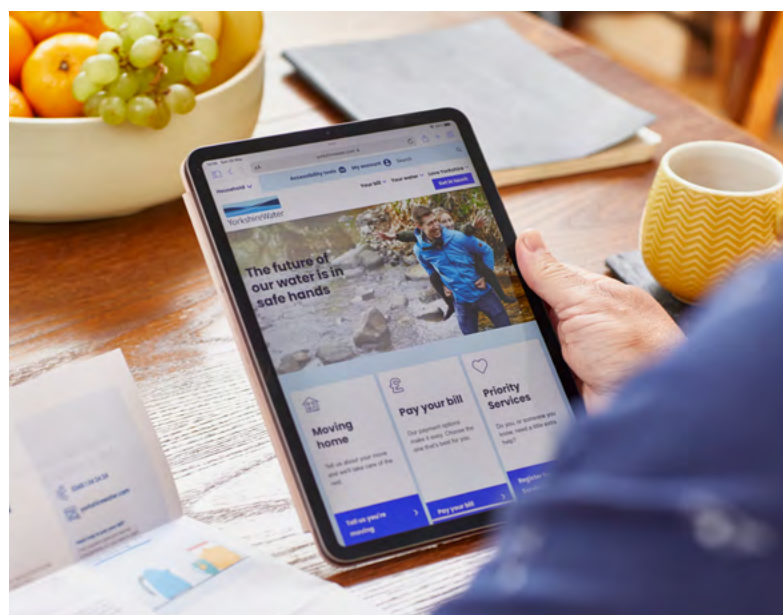
Sometimes, being proportionate doesn't mean involving more people – it means involving the right people. For more complex decisions, we may focus on expert or independent input alongside customer views. This includes:

Technical or complex decisions such as long-term planning or water resource strategies.

Decisions with significant environmental or regulatory complexity – for example, environmental programmes, pollution reduction approaches, or compliance with national standards.

Decisions requiring independent challenge particularly where trust is lower.

Local or specialist impacts where decisions affect specific communities.



Case Study: A material decision shaped by customer insight: investing in our infrastructure

This was an important decision that would affect customer bills, future investment, and service quality, so we involved a wide range of customers to help shape it.

1 The decision

We needed to decide how much to invest in improving older assets that aren't currently covered in our existing 5-year plan, while keeping customer bills affordable.

2 Why we involved customers

The decision affected:

1. customer bills
2. involved changes to our investment plans.

3 Who we spoke to

We surveyed:

- 1,448 household customers
- 50 future customers
- 101 business customers
- 43% in vulnerable circumstances.

Ensuring a broad and inclusive range of views.

We also spoke to our independent challenge group – The Yorkshire Forum for Water Customers (YFWC).

4 What customers told us

Customers and the Yorkshire Forum supported investment in ageing assets, but expected bills to remain affordable and had concerns about the level of spend required. Customers prioritised outcomes (reliability, environment, value for money) over the detail of which assets we invest in.

5 What changed as a result

We used customer feedback to:

- Reduce and refine the investment programme to limit the impact on bills
- Focus on areas delivering the greatest benefit for customers
- Keep bill increases at an acceptable level.

6 Final decision

The Board reviewed the evidence and independent challenge, and approved a revised, lower-cost investment plan that reduces bill impacts, with customer feedback at its core.

Making feedback more visible and easier to follow

Customers have told us that trust comes from actually seeing the difference their feedback makes. So we're focusing on being clearer and more consistent about how we show this.

[Helping to shape our decisions](#)

We'll do this by:



Sharing simple
"You said, we did" updates



Showing how feedback has shaped decisions
after consultations



Being open when decisions don't fully match customer preferences, and explaining why



Giving regular updates on progress through public reports



Recording more clearly how customer insight is used in decisions

Making it easier for customers to get involved

We're creating a dedicated webpage where customers can:

Find opportunities to get involved

Share their views

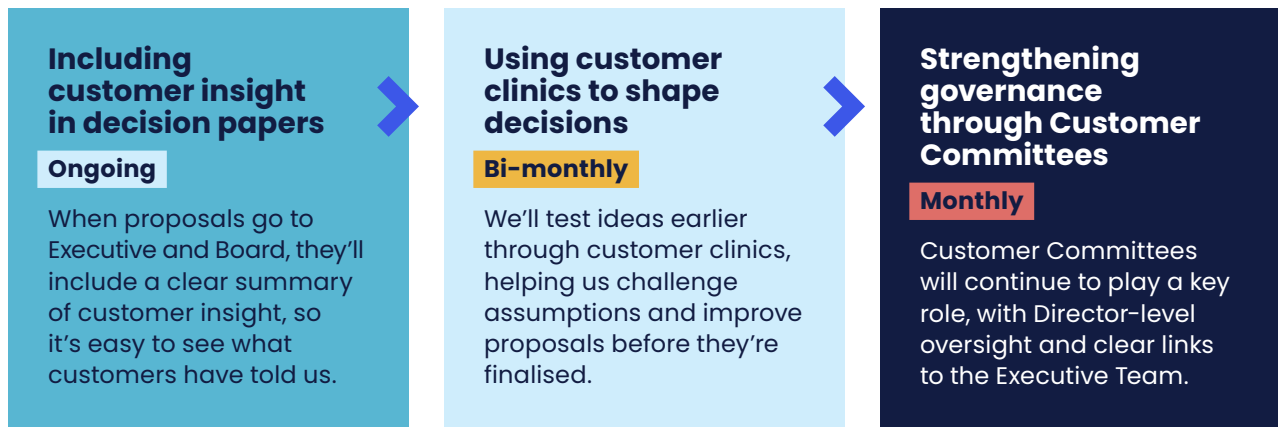
See what came out of previous engagement

Track what has changed as a result

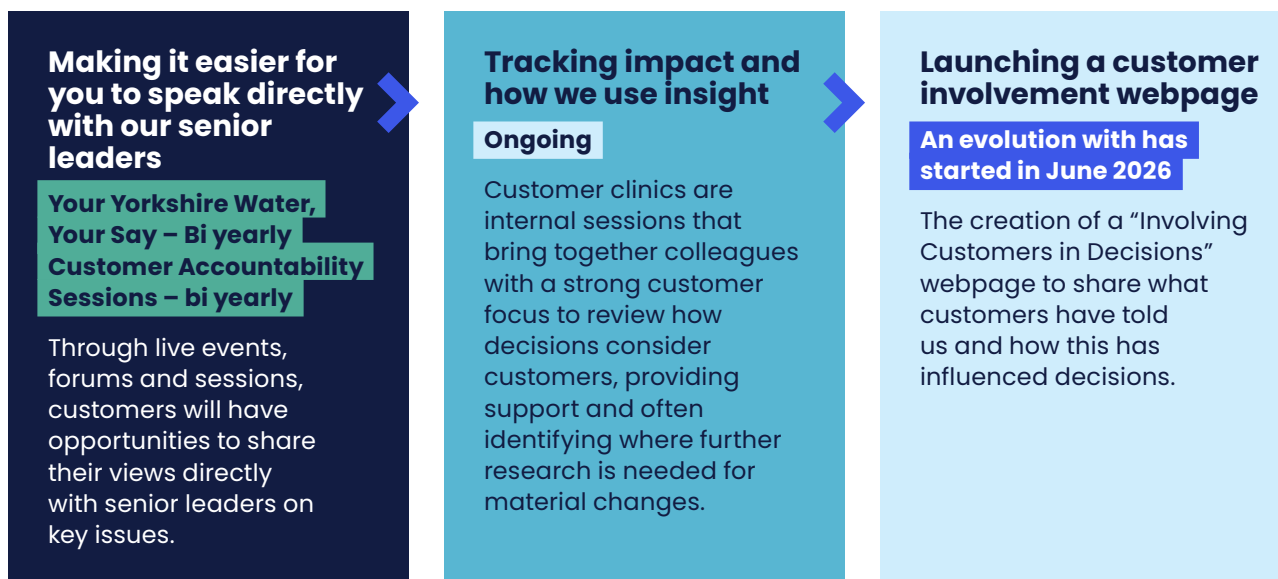
Overall, this helps create a clearer link between what customers tell us and what we actually do, so it's much easier to see how this impact is shaping decisions.

Our forward plan for 2026 to 2027 – what we'll focus on

We want to make customer involvement more consistent, transparent and structured across all the decisions that matter. This builds on what we already do, and helps make sure the customer voice is clearly evidenced, shared and embedded across the organisation.



Tracking impact and closing the feedback loop



Alongside this, we'll:

- Develop practical tools and guidance to help colleagues consider customer impact and materiality in decision-making
- Expand opportunities for customers to get involved through events and online channels
- Deliver a structured programme of engagement linked to key decisions – including the development of our business plan for 2030-2035
- Continue working with independent organisations to review and improve our approach.

Our 2026/27 programme of work and how we'll involve customers

Delivered by August 2026

1. WaterSupport enhancement research

We'll commission research to understand if our customers support the expansion of our WaterSupport offering, so we better meet the needs of customers who require additional support.

Stage 1 delivered

Stage 2 commencing October 2026

2. Water Resources North stages 1 & 2

We'll test different levels of ambition and options within the strategic regional plan alongside our regional partners Northumbrian Water and Hartlepool Water, with customers to understand preferences and acceptability, ensuring future plans reflect customer priorities and ambition.

Commencing October 2026

3. Drainage & Wastewater management Plan

We'll explore drainage and wastewater management options and ambition with customers, ensuring their priorities help shape future planning and investment decisions.

Commencing October 2026

4. Understanding the Value of Water

We'll undertake in-depth research to understand how customers value water, prioritise water and wastewater services and wider service outcomes, providing a robust evidence base for future decision-making – this will provide the foundations to our PR29 Business Plan (2030-2035).

Jan-March 2027

5. Horizon scanning & strategic annual review

We'll combine strategic review and structured horizon scanning to identify emerging risks, opportunities and customer expectations, ensuring we stay focused on the issues that matter most to customers and the business, and can respond early to shape our plans accordingly.

Commencing October 2027

6. Water Resources Management Plan

We'll carry out early-stage testing of water resource management options to shape the foundations and ambition of the plan, ensuring customer views are considered as plans develop.

27th October 2027

7. CCW Accountability Session

We'll continue to deliver and actively participate in CCW Accountability Sessions, using them to track progress against commitments, provide transparency, and ensure we are responding to the issues that matter most to customers.

Ongoing/ continuous improvement

8. End to end journey improvements

We will use journey mapping, customer feedback and service performance data to identify where customers experience issues, so we can prioritise improvements that address the most significant pain points.

Research complete July 2026

9. Website optimisation

We will use website analytics and customer testing to understand where customers struggle, so we can improve navigation and use clearer 'customer lead' language to make it easier to find what they need.

January 2027

10. Communications review

We will commission in-depth customer research to understand how communications work for customers across end-to-end journeys, so we can reduce confusion and better support customers, particularly when they are dealing with more complex or challenging issues.

Multiple Actions & Deadline Dates

11. Accountability Action Plan

We'll continue to deliver the actions agreed through CCW Accountability Sessions, using sessions with CCW to track progress and ensure we are addressing the issues that matter most to our customers.

9th & 14th July

12. Your Yorkshire Water, Your Say

We will provide customers with a direct route to challenge and influence decision-making, so senior leaders better understand customer priorities, concerns and where change is most needed.

Research complete September 2026

13. Supply pipe policy communications testing

We will test draft letters and materials with customers to identify what is unclear, so we can improve them and avoid confusion before rollout.

Research complete November 2026

14. 'Doing Right by Yorkshire' Campaign

We will use targeted research to test and refine campaign messages, so they reflect customer priorities, what they want to hear about from Yorkshire Water, are easy to understand – supporting our efforts to build trust.

Research complete October 2026

15. Blockage campaign testing

We will test campaign messages with customers to understand what drives the right behaviours, so we can clearly communicate what should and shouldn't go down drains and help reduce blockages and the impact these have on customers.

Research complete August 2026

16. Mains renewal engagement

We'll commission in-depth customer research, alongside using local feedback, to shape how we communicate about this work – helping customers understand why it's needed, reducing disruption where possible, and balancing delivery with local impact.



How we'll meet the Consumer Involvement Rule

By clearly identifying the decisions that matter, involving customers in a meaningful and proportionate way, and showing how feedback shapes what we do, we'll meet the requirements of the Consumer Involvement Rule and go beyond it.

Most importantly – our customers will feel that Yorkshire Water listens – and that their voice makes a real difference. This isn't just about 2026/2027, it's how we'll continue to involve customers in the decisions that matter over the longer term.

Component 1:

Gaining insight on customer preferences

Yorkshire Water has a strong, well-established approach to customer engagement which aligns with Ofwat's Consumer Involvement Rule and engagement principles. This includes:

Ongoing listening and observation

We use a range of feedback including surveys, complaints, mapping customer journey's and pain points, operational data and engagement activity to understand customer experiences and help shape service improvements and future decisions. We also gather feedback through independent forums, including CCW consumer panels and biannual accountability sessions, to hear directly from customers and understand what matters most to them.



Qualitative research with customers

We use more in-depth research to understand the reasons behind customer views. This includes focus groups (online and in person), interviews and online community discussions - helping us understand both what customers think and why.



Surveys of customers

We run structured engagement programmes to understand customer priorities and preferences, using a mix of online, face-to-face and telephone methods to make sure we hear from a broad range of customers. We also use feedback loops to keep track of service performance.



Independent perspectives from consumer experts

We also work with independent consumer experts, including the Yorkshire Forum for Water Customers, to understand their views and perspectives on key issues. This helps us build a broader, independent picture of what matters most to customers.



Component 2:

Using customer views in decision making

Yorkshire Water has a strong track record of involving customers in decisions, especially in business planning where affordability and investment choices really matter.

Our focus for 2026/2027 is to keep strengthening our tools, processes and governance so customer feedback is consistently built into decisions that have a real impact, including day-to-day operational insight.

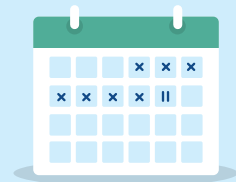
Board level decisions

Customer insight and feedback are included in Board papers and presentations to help shape decisions on affordability, service and investment. Board members also observe focus groups to build a better understanding of what matters to customers. Attendance and a summary of matters discussed at the Board are published in the Annual Report and Financial Statements.



CCW-convened Accountability Sessions

Senior leaders attend CCW Accountability Sessions, where customers can raise concerns and challenge where we're not meeting expectations. Feedback is discussed openly, actions are agreed, and progress is tracked transparently on the CCW website.



Executive engagement

Senior leaders spend time hearing directly from customers through activities like Your Yorkshire Water, Your Say, listening sessions, call listening and C-MeX feedback (the industry measure of customer experience based on surveys and real customer views). This helps keep customer priorities and needs front of mind when making decisions.



Internal governance (Customer clinics/ Committees)

Customer Clinics test proposals early using customer evidence and help challenge assumptions. Director-led Customer Committees provide structured oversight, with actions owned and tracked. Outputs then feed into business cases and, where relevant, Board decisions.



Component 3:

Demonstrating impact and closing the loop

We're strengthening how we show the impact of customer feedback, and making it easier for customers to see the difference their input makes.

Demonstrating impact

We already use customer feedback to shape key decisions, especially in business planning and investment (for example, our asset health case study shown earlier). These examples show how customer views have influenced the scale, scope and prioritisation of decisions.



New customer involvement webpage

We've launched a dedicated webpage where customers can see how their feedback has been used and track outcomes. It will continue to evolve, with more ways to get involved and see the impact of their views.



Closing the loop and transparency

We know this hasn't always been shared consistently. We're improving how we publish engagement summaries and explain how feedback has shaped decisions, including where decisions differ and why. We're also developing a more consistent way of recording what customers told us, how we used it, and what changed as a result.



Independent challenge

CCW panels and the Yorkshire Forum for Water Customers will continue to provide independent challenge, helping strengthen how we respond to and act on customer feedback.

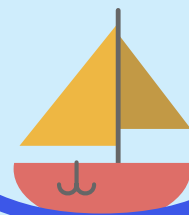


How our Board shapes decisions that matter to customers

Our Board is closely involved in how customer views shape the decisions we make, with a clear expectation that customer evidence is considered in choices that impact our customers.

The Board plays an active role by:

- Scrutinising the decisions with the greatest impact on customers – such as those related to affordability, service levels, major investment choices, and changes to our plans (such as the case study on page 11) – and ensuring each is supported by clear, robust customer evidence
- Holding regular Board-level discussions focused on customers and their experience, drawing on service performance, insight and engagement activity
- Hearing directly from customers through call listening, observing focus groups, and engagement with our independent customer forum, the Yorkshire Forum for Water Customers
- Overseeing how customer insight is used through our governance structures, including Customer Committees.



Further Information appendices



More on how we involve customers

This section gives a bit more detail on the different ways we involve customers, building on what's set out on page 7.

Ongoing customer insight

We carry out large-scale, ongoing research – including Ofwat's C-MeX and our own enhanced surveys – to understand what customers think and how their expectations and experiences change over time. One of our independent tracking studies has been running for over 15 years.

Bespoke research for key decisions

For more complex or high-impact decisions, we run tailored research using a mix of surveys, workshops and discussions to understand both what customers think and why, so decisions are based on strong, representative evidence.

Everyday customer feedback

We look at complaints, contact data, social media and operational data to spot emerging issues and get a clear picture of day-to-day customer experiences.

Your Water Online Community

Our online community gives customers a chance to share their views regularly and helps us test ideas quickly and informally.

Your Yorkshire Water Your Say

Our 'Your Yorkshire Water Your Say' sessions take place twice a year and give customers the opportunity to speak directly with our CEO and senior leaders in live, interactive sessions, sharing their views on the issues that matter most.

Consumer panels (run independently by CCW)

We work with independent consumer panels, facilitated by the Consumer Council for Water (CCW), made up of around 50 customers from across the region. These panels give regular feedback on key topics like service, affordability and environmental performance, and play an important role in providing independent challenge and holding us to account.

Targeted engagement

Where decisions affect specific groups, like vulnerable customers, businesses or local communities – we engage directly with those groups and relevant organisations.

Customer accountability sessions (independently facilitated)

We take part in Customer Accountability Sessions run by CCW, alongside members of independent consumer panels. These sessions bring together smaller groups of customers, giving them the chance to question and challenge senior leaders directly. After each session, clear actions and outcomes are agreed and published on the CCW website, helping keep things transparent and accountable.

Customer clinics (internal decision support)

We run customer clinics as an internal forum where teams bring forward proposals – like new policies, communications or service improvements – to be reviewed from a customer perspective.

These sessions bring together teams such as customer insight, communications and billing to challenge and support proposals, making sure customer needs are understood and built in early. They also help teams work out what engagement is needed and what evidence should support decisions.

In practice, this includes helping teams understand customer issues, testing communications before launch, and shaping new experiences – for example, making sure customers are at the heart of designing our smart water meter journey.

Customer committees (internal governance)

A formal Executive group that integrates customer insight into decision-making, providing structured oversight, challenge and direction on customer priorities. It meets monthly, with a biannual deep dive, ensuring customer perspectives are reflected in governance, prioritisation and decisions.

Get in touch with us

We welcome your comments and feedback on this report. If you have any questions, comments or would like to give us feedback on this or any of our other publications, please get in touch with us:

There are lots of ways to get in touch:



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Send comments via our website link
yorkshirewater.com/get-in-touch/



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Or write to us
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