

South East Water

Vulnerability Strategy – Creating an Integrated Housing Solution

Claire Billis
Vulnerability Strategy Manager

February 2020

h₂ow

South East Water



Litres of water a day
That's how much water we supply to around 2.2 million people.



Water treatment works
That's how we ensure our water is of the highest quality.



Water quality tests each year
That's how we ensure your water meets the highest standards.



Kilometres of water mains
That's how we transfer fresh drinking water direct to your tap.



Employees
That's how we make sure your water supply runs 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Headquartered in Snodland, Kent – South East Water is one of **21** regulated water supply companies in England and Wales, and we have **2.2 million** people living in our supply area who depend on us to deliver safe, high quality drinking water **24 hours a day, 365 days a year**.

We supply **915,000** properties with water from more than **250** boreholes and wells, **six** river intakes and **six** surface reservoirs.

Our business is built around the need to pump that water from the source, treat it to very highest standards and distribute it to our customers through **14,780** kilometres of water mains.

We are relied upon to maintain water supply to **5,657km²** of Kent, Sussex, Surrey, Berkshire and Hampshire.

Water Supply Area



Vulnerability Strategy 2019

- In April, 2019, we created a specialist Vulnerability Team and a new strategy to identify and support vulnerable customers – Affordable, accessible and supportive services.
- The circumstances that cause customers to be identified as vulnerable were extended, including modifying the qualifying conditions of those who benefit by putting more emphasis on individual risks and needs, taking into account bereavement, job loss and sickness.
- Developing partnership with other organisations is a key element of the new strategy to extend more services to a growing number of vulnerable customers.

Vulnerability Values

Access to Services

- **Priority Services Register**
 - A register for customer with additional needs to select a particular service
 - Enables customers at risk to be contacted during emergency or unplanned interruption.
 - Sharing local information with the emergency services during an incident
- **Dedicated 'Customer Care Team'**
 - Supporting customers through the application process and offering support services over the phone
 - One stop shop from identification to application
- **Dedicated 'outreach' team**
 - Help with financial related issues
 - Communicating face to face and attending community events
 - Assisting with water meters and understanding bills
- **Choice of communication channel – accessibility feedback and review**
 - Phone, social media or chat – easy menu's, quick response times
 - 'Recite me' website accessibility – language, disabilities
 - Dedicated email services
- **Simple application form / joint application form**
 - Introduction of joint PSR form with UKPN

Partnerships

- **Trusted third parties**
 - Using our partners knowledge and networks to engage and promote
 - Local CA focus groups – sharing experiences and vulnerabilities
 - Contractor teams working with us on key customer programmes
- **Community Groups**
 - Housing providers – building relationships to support new development
 - Attend local events – high visibility
 - Foodbanks – support with set up and access to support services
- **Working with other service providers**
 - Not a water specific issue – customers who are suffering financial hardship are likely to be struggling with other household bills
 - Promoting best practice – sectors have similar yet different support
 - Learning from energy providers
- **Panels for additional support**
 - Helping hands / supporting financial recommendations
 - Financial inclusion partnerships – working together to support customers

Vulnerability Values

Financial Support

- **Affordability**
 - 98.5% of customers pay – helps keep bills low
 - Helping hands social fund assists those suffering from financial hardship
- **Flexible payment options**
 - Working with DWP to receive payment through customer benefits
 - Customised payment plans
 - Short term arrangements – any amounts, any frequency
- **Supportive and simple tariffs**
 - Watersure – pay no more than an average despite the water usage
 - Social tariff – water charge capped at a fixed rate
 - Single room tariff/single occupier – discounts for those living alone
- **Customer metering programme**
 - Over 90% of customers benefit from having a meter
 - Phase in option – for those higher users to help them manage through the change
 - Smart meter trial
- **Targeted segmentation**
 - Sharing data – to target the right support for those in need using our networks
 - Obtaining data – from data warehouse – data mapping

Our People

- **Leadership and culture change**
 - Shareholders and investors buy-in – supported by our business plan
 - Customer centric approach – 10/10 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 received additional training around services offered
- **Dedicated Vulnerability Strategy Team**
 - Recognise that vulnerability requires focussed commitment
 - Targeted to find local community groups and forums to support identification and engagement with vulnerable customers
- **Staff with empathy recruited**
 - Ensures vulnerable customers are positively impacted and disadvantaged
 - Specially selected team to identify transient vulnerability
- **CRM tools**
 - Looks for 'key words' and flags for support
 - Able to identify PSR customers

Vulnerability Strategy Delivery Plan

- Key elements

Stakeholder Engagement

- To enhance relationships with key stakeholders in order for them to support and delivery the strategy
- To create new relationship/partnership opportunities
- To explore an Integrated Social Housing Providers Service

Data Collection and Mapping

- To define vulnerable groups and use mapping tool
- To map stakeholders within supply area in order to undertake a gap analysis

Communication and Accessibility

- To ensure all communications are reaching defined vulnerable groups
- To ensure access to services /information is available to all customer groups and support readily available

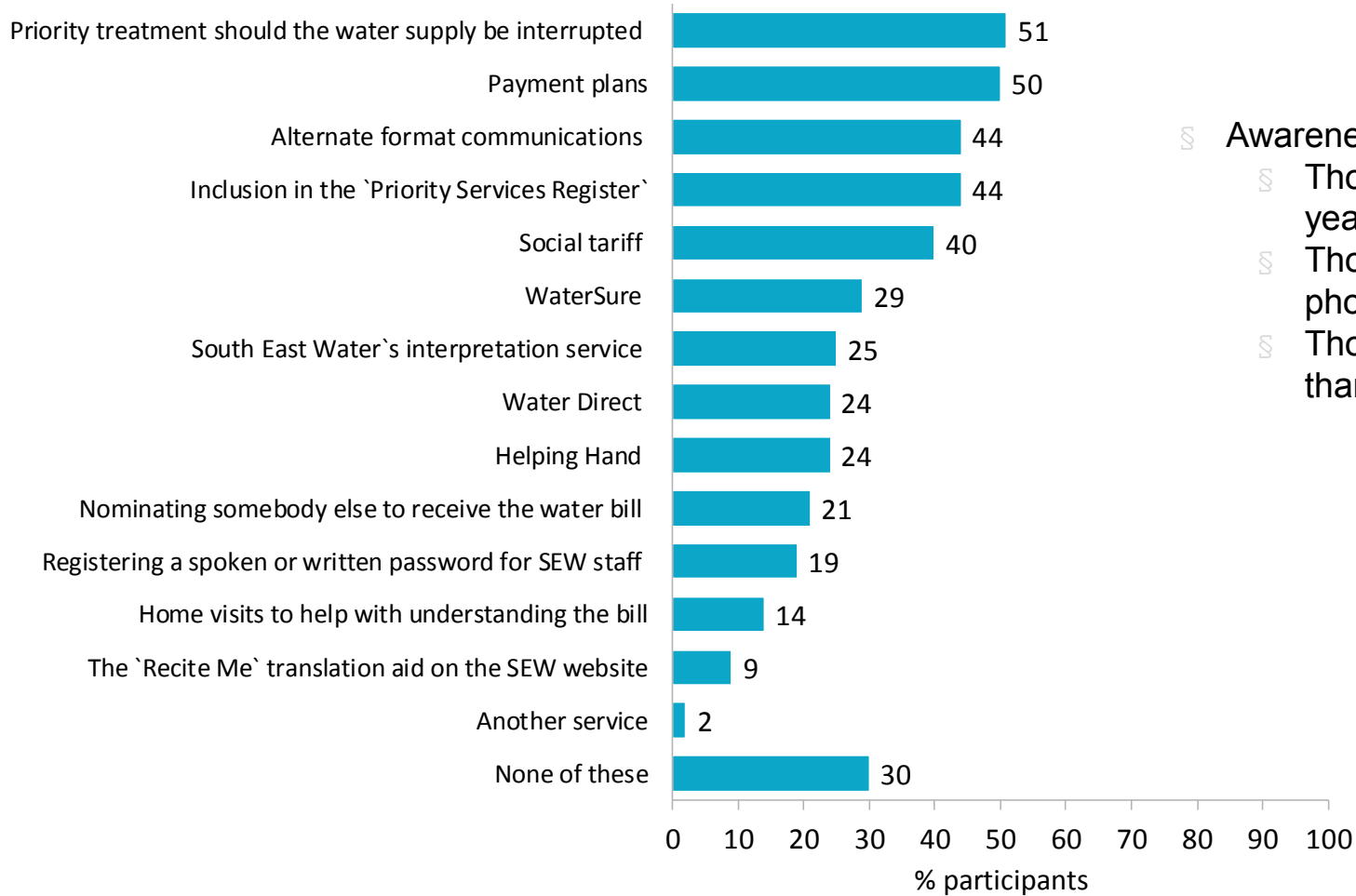
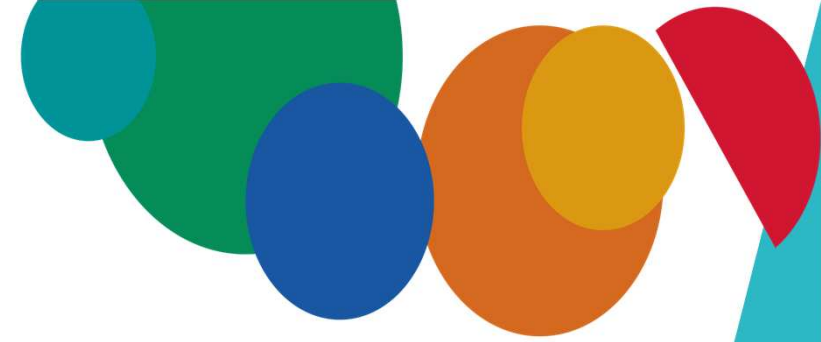
- Service Improvement

- PSR service offer and on-board pack

KPI / Performance Commitments

Performance Commitment	Where we are today	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
Number of customers receiving financial Support	37,676	47,000	58,000	66,000	72,000	75,000
Number of customers receiving non financial support	12,441	31,000	49,000	70,000	90,000	110,000
Satisfaction of household customers who are experiencing payment difficulties	4.2	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5
Satisfaction of household customers who are receiving non-financial support	4.1	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5
Satisfaction of household customers on our vulnerability schemes during a supply interruption	TBC	+0.1	+0.1	+0.1	+0.1	+0.1
Satisfaction of stakeholders in relation to assistance schemes we offer	3.4	3.6	3.7	3.8	3.9	4.0

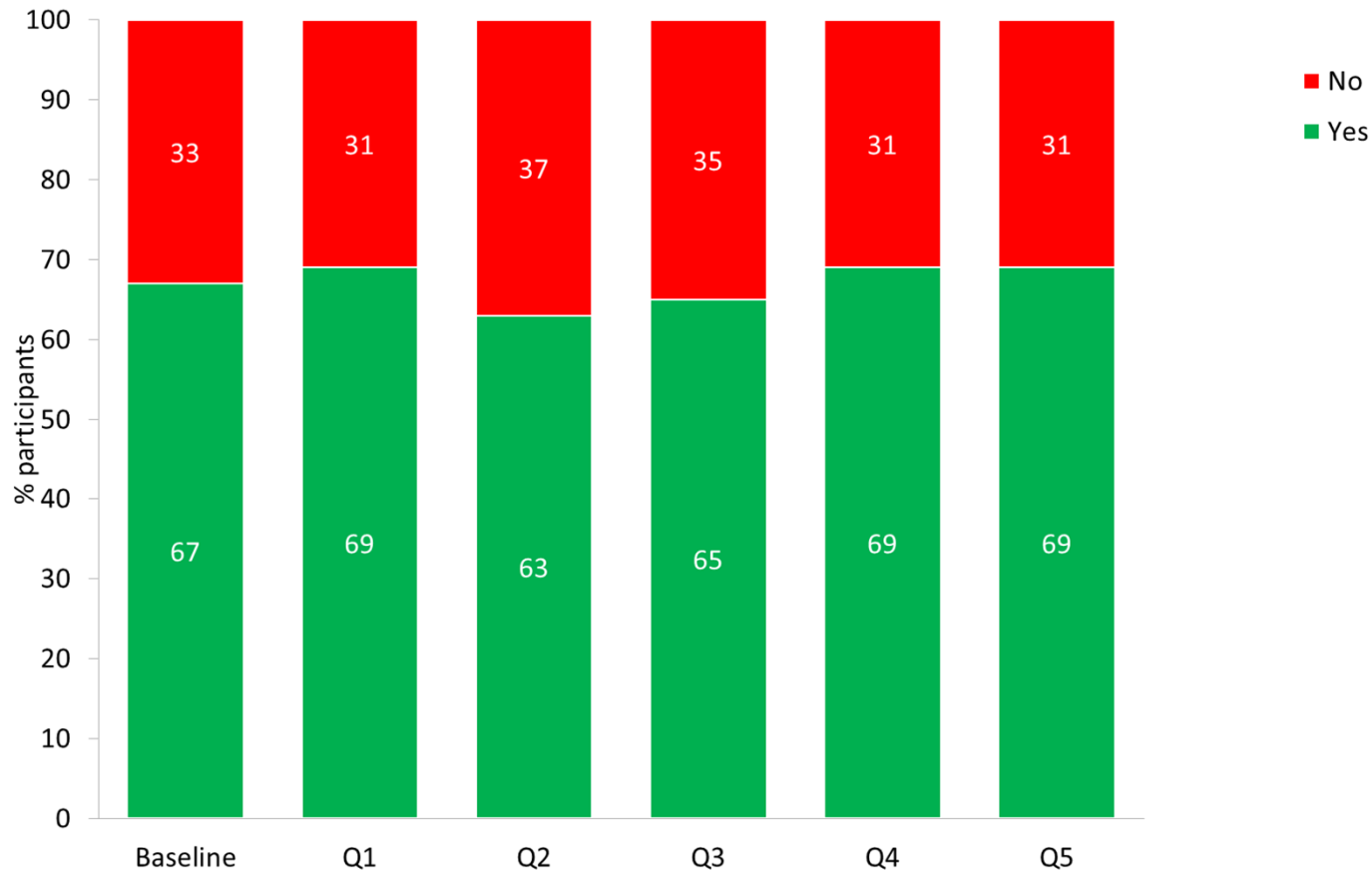
Seven in ten stakeholders are aware of at least one of SEW's support schemes



- § Awareness of all services is higher among
 - § Those who have made contact in the last year
 - § Those who completed the survey by phone rather than online
 - § Those who are 'other stakeholders' rather than councils

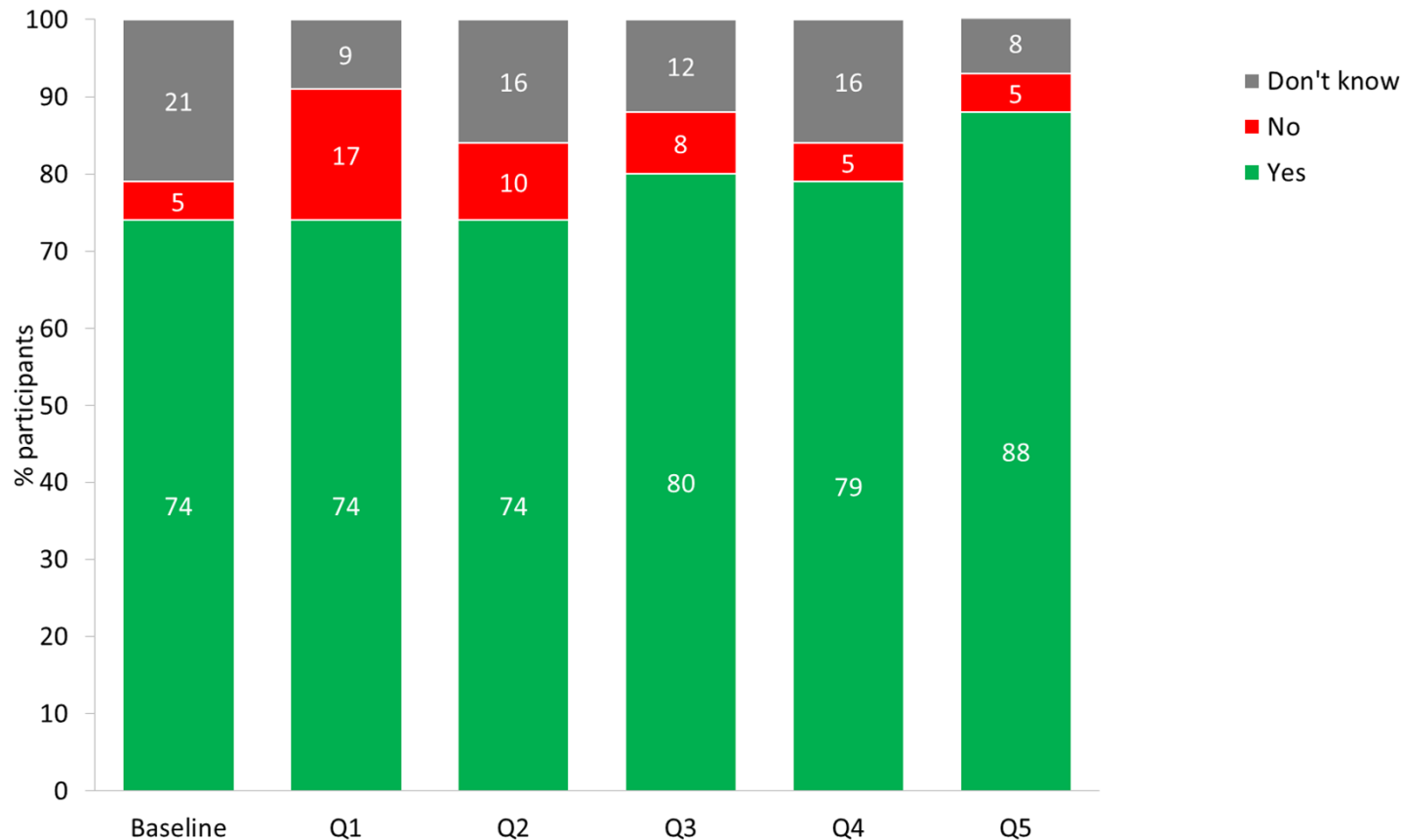
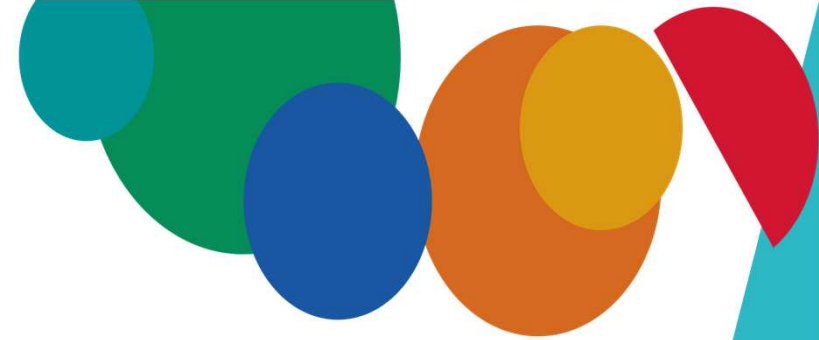
Q2. Which of the following support schemes or services that South East Water offer are you aware of?
 Base: 2019 (103)

Nearly seven in ten say that the support or service they were given made a positive difference to their financial situation



Q4. Does the support or service that South East Water gives you make a positive difference to your financial situation?
Bases: Baseline 500; Q1 300; Q2 300; Q3 300; Q4 300; Q5 300

Nearly four in five would recommend South East Water's PSR



Significantly more people would recommend SEW's PSR in Q5 than in the Baseline

Q7. Would you recommend South East Water's Priority Services Register?

Base: Customers who were on the PSR: Baseline 117; Q1 53; Q2 50; Q3 50; Q4 62; Q5 64

NB Q7 was added part-way through the Baseline fieldwork, so not all eligible participants were asked it. The Baseline data is based on those who answered the question

Future Challenges

- Ofwat Final Determination – PR19
 - Overall package sets new and stretching standards for how water companies should respond: improving performance through efficiency and innovation, while keeping bills affordable and creating a sustainable future for water.
 - By 2025 at least 7% of each company's customers will be registered for priority services, two million more than now.
- Priorities for South East Water
 - To reduce water bills
 - Stretching performance standards in areas of supply interruptions, bursts and leakage
 - Increase help for vulnerable customers – we have pledged to go further, aiming to reach over 10% of our customers registered for priority services by 2025.

Priority Services Register

We offer extra assistance through our **Priority Services Register**, which is free to join

Who is eligible for this scheme?

We offer a range of special services – not only for those with mobility restrictions, but also for our customers who have additional needs such as a hearing or sight impairment, disabled or suffering from a long or short term illness.

Special services include:

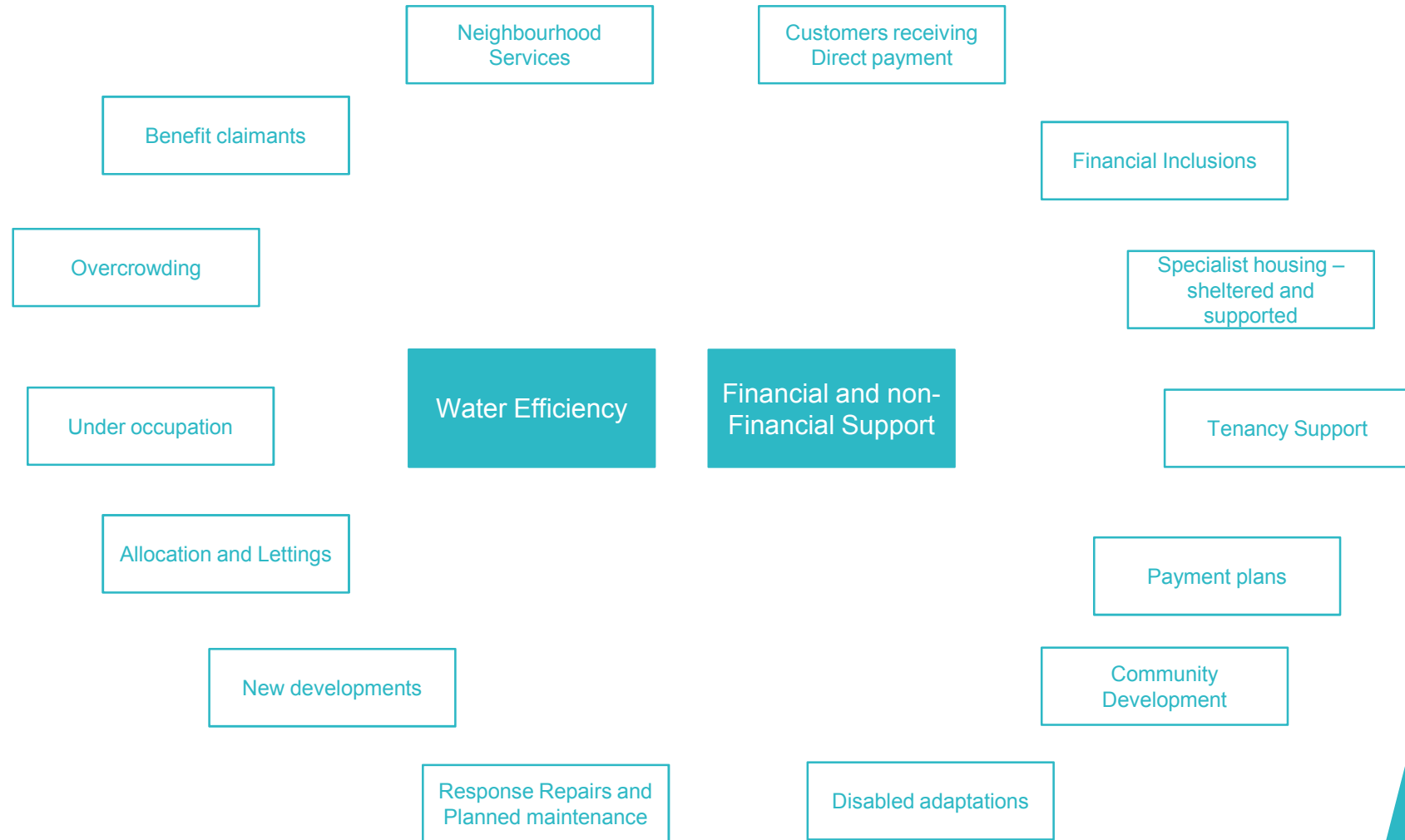
- Receiving prior warning of planned work which may interrupt a water supply.
- Receive priority treatment should a water supply be interrupted - will often hand-deliver bottled drinking water to our customers with mobility issues.
- Receive important information in a more convenient format, such as easy-to-read large print or the spoken word, where our normal presentation style is not suitable.
- Register own spoken or written password for our staff to use so that customers can identify them if we need to call.
- Receive information about specialist organisation's which are able to provide advice on possible adaptations to water fittings and appliances around the home.
- Provide an interpretation service.
- Home visits to discuss any concerns, such as charges and billing.
- Access to Recite Me – web based accessibility solution for customers.

A Trusted Partner – Your Resident / Our Customers

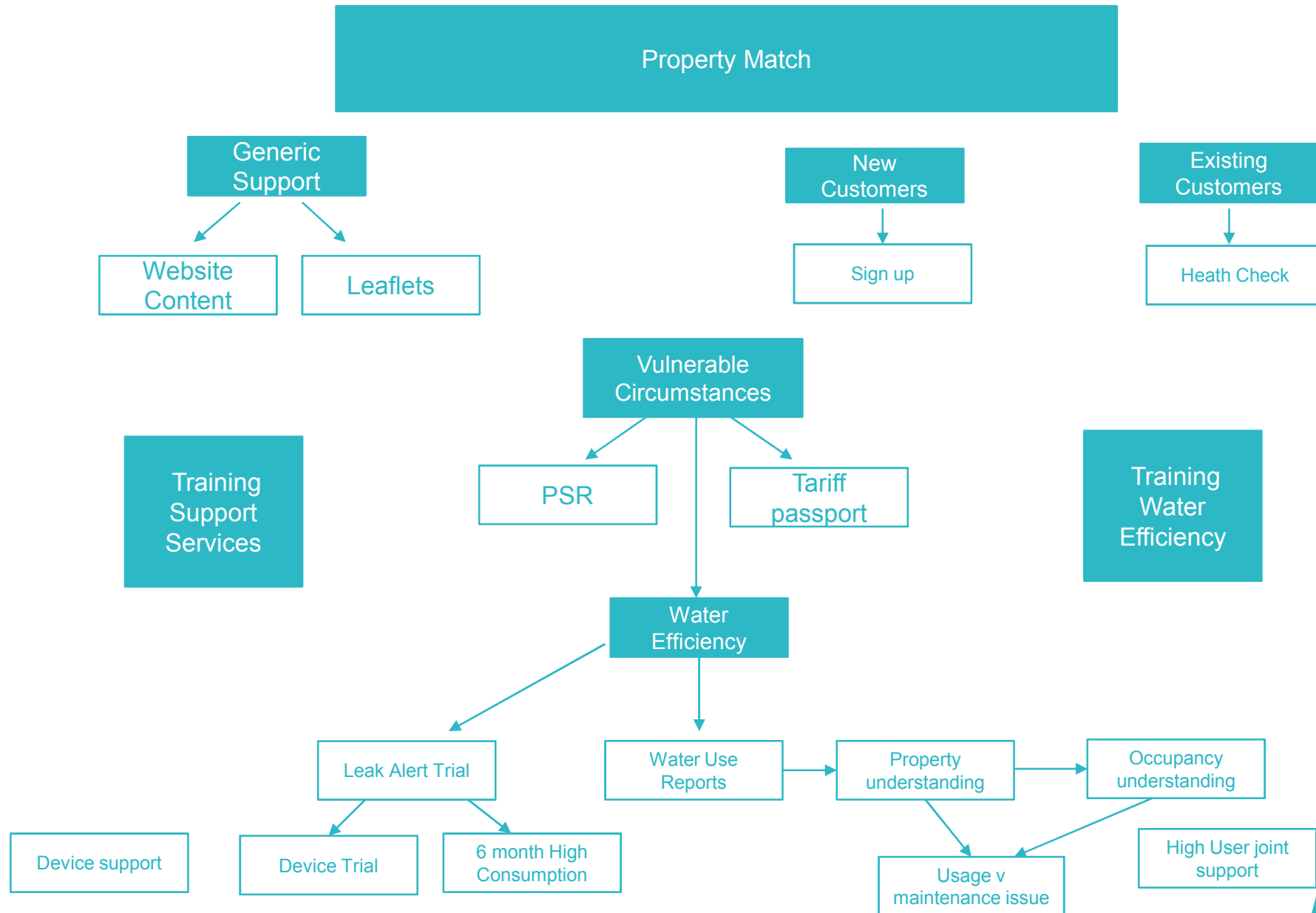
Benefits

- Providing a joined up solution for vulnerable customer who can access both financial and non-financial support,
- Developing partnerships with other organisations is a key element of the new strategy to extend more services to a growing number of vulnerable customers.
- One-stop approach – a single sign-up process to establish eligibility for the support services offered by all of the partnering organisations. There is no longer a requirement to duplicate assessments, enabling support to be fast tracked.

Integrated Support – Housing Services



Integrated Housing Support



Contact Details:

Claire Billis - Vulnerability Strategy Manager

Telephone: 01634 276312

Mobile : 07866 899678

Email: Claire.P.Billis@southeastwater.co.uk

