

YourVoice – Affordability and Vulnerability sub group

Terms of Reference & Membership

1. Requirement and Role

- 1.1. YourVoice, the Independent Challenge Group for North West water customers and stakeholders, provides independent scrutiny, advice and challenge in relation to United Utilities' customer engagement and research activities.
- 1.2. In addition, YourVoice reviews and challenges United Utilities' business plan delivery as well as reviewing and assuring its customer reporting. It considers, reviews and challenges the company's customer research and engagement, and its PR24 business plan submission to Ofwat.
- 1.3. The role of YourVoice is to be a 'critical friend' to United Utilities, understanding challenges, commenting on plans and expressing views about the key issues and priorities.
- 1.4. To support its work, and enable more detailed scrutiny of important work areas, YourVoice has established four sub-groups focusing on customer engagement & research; the environment, natural capital & social capital agenda; seeking the views of regional stakeholders; and looking at the vulnerability and affordability agenda. The Chair of YourVoice will be a member of each sub groups.
- 1.5. These **Terms of Reference are for the Affordability and Vulnerability sub group.**

2. Purpose & Terms of Reference

The Affordability and Vulnerability sub group will:

- 2.1. undertake detailed reviews of United Utilities' performance and proposals from a vulnerable customer engagement perspective. It will review and challenge the company's approach to customer research, customer engagement and best practice in this area. The sub group will review the company's longer-term plans and business-as-usual activity around vulnerable customers, hard to reach groups and those with affordability challenges.
- 2.2. seek to understand the challenges facing the company, the utilities sector and vulnerable customers, hard to reach groups and customers with affordability challenges, acting as a critical friend. It will comment on plans and express views about the issues and priorities from a customer service perspective. It will seek collaborative and open working between members to promulgate this agenda.
- 2.3. comment on the extent to which the company has sought the views of, and listened to, vulnerable customers and stakeholders representing these customer views. Alongside the

Customer Engagement sub group, it will ensure the views of these customers and stakeholders are taken into account in UU's business planning and normal operations.

- 2.4. review engagement methods and materials used, attend engagement sessions and receive and review outcomes from relevant research and engagement work.
- 2.5. investigate and share best practice among its membership and the wider community.
- 2.6. identify practical opportunities for information sharing and cross working with other organisations
- 2.7. provide a forum for engagement concerning plans for business transformation and communication with hard to reach groups.

On the delivery of the **2020-25 Business Plan (AMP7)**, the sub group will:

- 2.8. review and challenge the company on the delivery of its AMP7 business plan performance around tariffs, affordability, priority services, as requested by the Customer Engagement sub group. It will consider key issues and challenges around affordability and for vulnerable customers and, where appropriate, undertake a 'deep dive' looking in detail at particular areas and emerging issues.
- 2.9. provide critical feedback on the perception and experience of UU services in relation to hard to reach customers and those in vulnerable circumstances.
- 2.10. consider ways in which the company reports progress on its customer engagement activities and reporting, including advising on improvements to the clarity of information provided to vulnerable and hard to reach customers.
- 2.11. contribute to the design of customer and stakeholder communications to reach vulnerable and hard to reach customers.

On preparations for the **PR24 Price Review process (2025 – 2030)**, the sub group will:

- 2.12. provide challenge and assurance to the Customer Engagement sub group on the quality, clarity, and extent of the customer research and engagement with vulnerable and hard to reach customers.
- 2.13. ensure the company has engaged with different types of existing customers whilst considering the impact on future customers.
- 2.14. liaise closely with the Customer Engagement sub group by providing specialist input and challenge to the company on the scope and quality of its customer engagement in relation to customers in vulnerable circumstance and with affordability issues. The extent of company engagement with hard to reach groups will also be challenged, and the extent to which the research evidence and insights are reflected in business plan proposals.

3. Governance and membership

- 3.1. The sub group's membership will be drawn from vulnerable customer representatives,

representatives from other utilities, advice services representatives and those with an understanding of customers in vulnerable circumstances or facing affordability challenges such as money advice, disability, older people and charities supporting people in vulnerable circumstances. Three members of the Customer Engagement sub group will be members of this sub group to support information flow.

- 3.2. The Chair will be selected by the YourVoice panel and will be responsible for reporting back on sub group activities in line with agreed levels of delegation. Administrative support in holding and reporting on meetings will be provided by the independent YourVoice secretary.
- 3.3. The relevant Director, or senior nominee, will be United Utilities' lead representative on the sub group, and will be supported by colleagues from across the organisation as required.
- 3.4. The sub group will aim to meet at least quarterly but with more frequent meetings as required, for example to deal with urgent issues or during the later stages of the PR24 process.
- 3.5. The sub group will be quorate if the Chair is present plus at least two other members.
- 3.6. Members may meet in private if they deem it necessary.
- 3.7. Papers will be circulated to sub group members at least three working days in advance of meetings. Meeting minutes will be published on the YourVoice web pages.
- 3.8. Members will declare any interests at least annually and if applicable at any meeting of this sub group.
- 3.9. Appropriate induction and training will be provided to sub group members, and detailed briefing made available on any new policy introductions, consultations or changes.