

Vulnerability stakeholder event 2020

Today's focus – Accessibility and Communications

10.00 to 12.00

5 November 2020



Welcome

Andy Clowes,
Head of Customer
Experience and Strategy



A message from our CEO, David Hinton

south east water

Pure know_how

Introduction

Jane Crisp,
Vulnerability Strategy
Manager



Agenda

- 10.10** Covid-19, how we adapted
- 10.20** Vulnerability Strategy
- 10.35** Guest speaker, Rob Melvill,
Citizens Advice
- 10.55** Communicating with our
- 11.10** Break out rooms
- Short break**
- 11.30** Open discussion
- 11.50** Prize Quiz
- 12.00** Close



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How we adapted to the new normal



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Responding to the pressures of Covid-19

Help for priority customers

We can all benefit from a bit of extra support from time to time, whether it's due to age, ill health, disability, mental health problems, financial worries or language barriers.

Our Priority Services are free and could help you, your family or your friends benefit from additional support from us so we can respond quickly to any particular needs.

If you would like to register for Priority Services, please fill in our secure online form below or call our dedicated Customer Care Team on 0333 000 2468. We're here Monday to Friday between 8am - 7pm, and Saturdays between 8am and 1pm.

Even if you don't need these services yourself, you may have a family member, friend or neighbour who might benefit from a little extra support, so please let them know about Priority Services. It's completely free to our customers and you don't have to be the named bill payer to benefit from them.

Watch the short video below to hear about how Priority Services work and what we're doing with other utility companies to promote them.



southeastwater.co.uk/priority

Responding to the challenges of Covid-19

Promotion of
affordability
support and tariffs

Promotion of our Priority
Services Register

Changing team
procedures

Re-assuring
customer emails

Maintaining our
services

Stakeholder
updates

Changing team
procedures

Protecting our
teams



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COVID-19

**We're still
working**



Maintaining services for customers

Maintaining communication

- Slight service reduction for 1 week period with customers call wait slightly over 30 seconds
- Asked customers to contact digitally where possible
- Issues 1.5m emails to customers promoting PSR
- 50% uplift of customers on PSR
- 99% Customer Services team working remotely

Technician & field visits

- Prior to lockdown introduced triage by phone to establish risk and necessity to enter property
- All non-essential visits ceased during lockdown
- Meter reading for external meters continued
- Maintained essential leakage repairs
- Worked with local highways departments to ensure that our essential work was understood along with wide scale social media campaign

Wholesale service provision

- Non-household retail market - three month payment break for retailer
- Demand management

Maintaining staff wellbeing

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Pure know_how

**In a few words, please tell us
what your organisation did to
support staff during the initial
lockdown period?**

**What organisations have you or
will you be signposting your
teams to for additional support,
should they need it?**

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Vulnerability Strategy re-cap

Accessible

Affordable

Supportive

Vulnerability strategy update

1. Vulnerability Strategy Team



2. Partnerships



3. Horizon scanning/Insight Hub



4. Performance



How we know our strategy is working

Measure	Performance Commitment by 2024/2025	2020/21 End of Year Target	Year to Date Status	Status to FD Target
Satisfaction of household customer who are experiencing payment difficulties	4.5 out of 5	4.2	4.4	+0.2
Satisfaction of household customers who are receiving non-financial support	4.5 out of 5	4.1	4.3	+0.2
Satisfaction of our customers that are on our vulnerability schemes during a supply interruption	4.6 out of 5	4.2	4.2	0.0
Household customers receiving financial support	75,000	47,000	40,144	- 6856
Household customers receiving non-financial support	110,000	3.2%	23,175 (2.4%)	- 0.8%
Satisfaction of stakeholders in relation to assistance schemes offered by South East Water	4.0	3.6	Annual	
Checking data for customers receiving non financial support	Attempted contacts by 2025 - 90%	45%	18%	-27%
Checking data for customers receiving non financial support	Actual contacts by 2025 – 50%	17.5%	14 %	-3.5%

What we are seeing

Call volumes up



Visits to
webpage
payment support
up



Water Direct
Payment Down

What we have seen in the industry

900,000 families across UK getting help with their water bills (2020)

This figure is set to rise to 1.5m over the next few years

80,000 households took payment breaks

In 2008 4% struggled to pay their water bill

Last year this rose to 17%

Only 9% approached their water company

That 17% are those we know about it - does not take into account those who are Just About Managing

Accessibility should be at the front of our minds when designing any frontline service, both public and non-statutory. Since the start of the pandemic, which communication methods have proved most popular for your service users?

In regard to accessing support since the start of the pandemic, what profile of people are you noticing that seek support the most?

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Responding to COVID-19

The importance of advice and partnership working



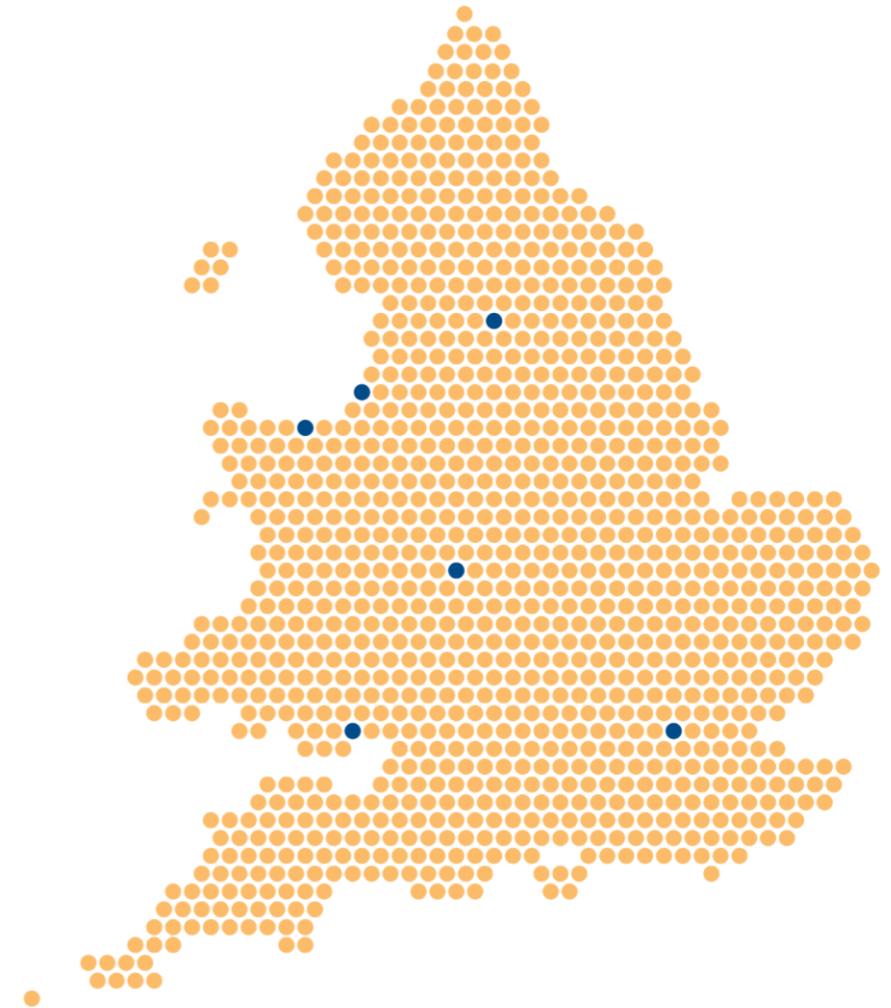
Rob Melvill
November 2020

Our service

We're a network of over **270** local Citizens Advice (usually) operating in over **2,550** locations across England and Wales.

Last year we gave advice, support or information to **2.8 million** people directly over the **phone, by email, webchat, or face to face**.

Millions more viewed our online advice pages, with **34,500,000** visits to our website.



Short-term changes and trends

Responding to the crisis

- Like all organisations - particularly those with a predominantly in-person service - COVID 19 created huge challenges for Citizens Advice
- We developed a rapid response programme to the situation:
 - Mobilised a new advice team, updating multiple pieces of content daily: Including a new section of coronavirus pages, covering sick-pay, debt, benefits, and updates across hundreds of existing pages
 - Moved to remote service delivery across 270 offices: Within a week we switched to phone and digital-first
 - Redeployed 1,000 face to face only advisers to deliver telephone advice
 - Expanded service provision: out of hours, shifting advisers to outbound advice to respond to messenger and email queries received out of hours

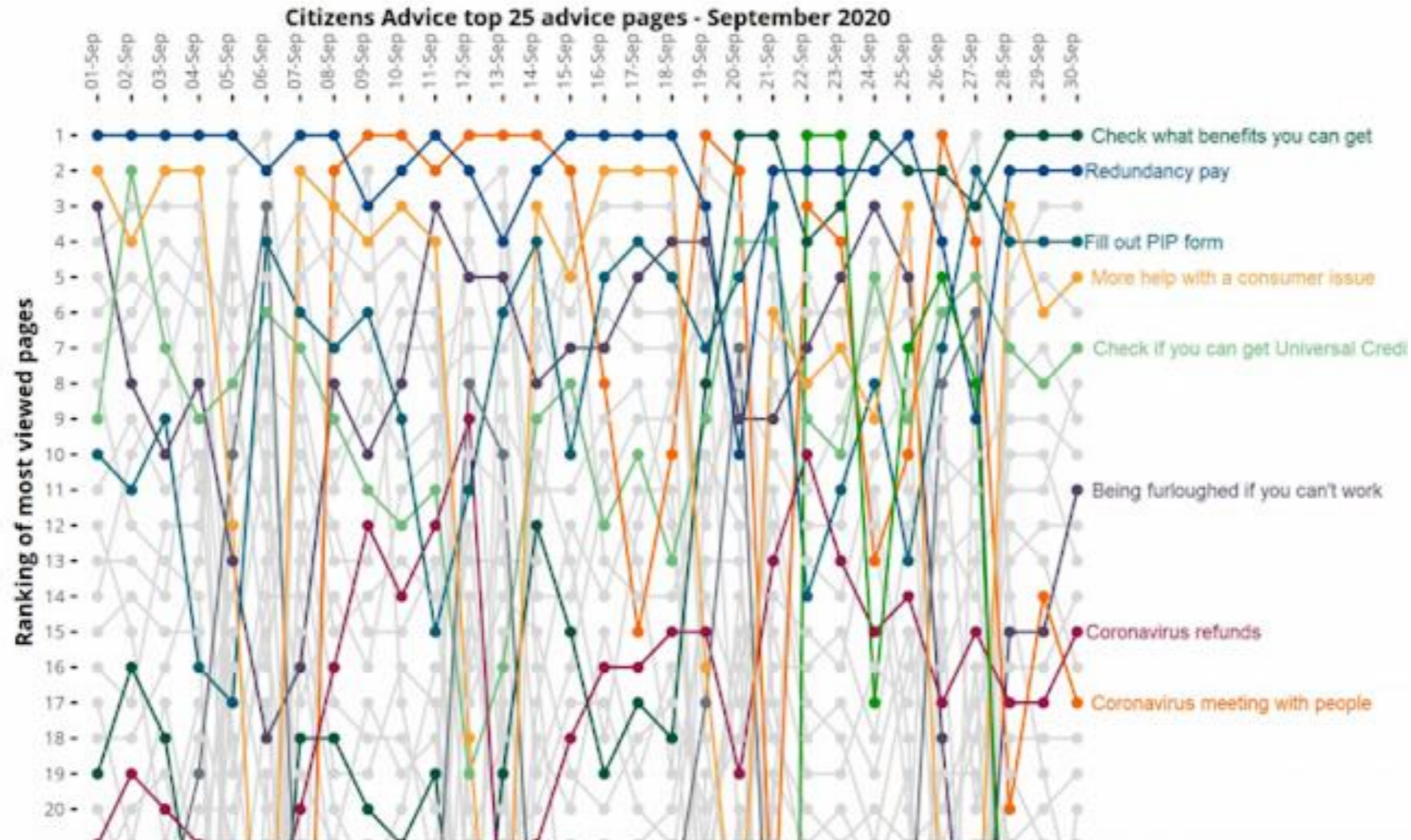


There was an immediate surge in demand

- In the first month after the coronavirus was declared a pandemic...
 - Steep increases in views of our advice pages about sick pay and about cancelling holidays - and new pages such as 'What to do if you can't pay your bills because of coronavirus' and 'Being furloughed if you can't work'
 - Our advisers helped 28,700 people with employment issues, and over 100,000 people with benefits queries
- In the second month demand for our advice became more consistent
 - Our page on being furloughed if you can't work was the most viewed - with 270,000 views during the month.
 - One-quarter of the people our advisers helped were looking for advice on Universal Credit and our advisers also helped 22,300 people with employment problems
- Things have stabilised somewhat since then
 - Redundancy is the biggest issue people seeking advice for online, while benefits / UC, debt and employment are the issues our advisers are dealing with most commonly



Online search trends in September



Long-term implications

Concerns over accessibility / inclusion

- We saw 100,000 fewer clients in March / April 2020 than was the case in the same period in 2019 – most likely because of barriers to accessing digital or telephony advice services
 - Disabled people
 - Clients from BAME groups
 - People where English is not their first language
 - People with hearing impairments
 - Clients with long term mental health conditions
 - Older people
- Conducting research and innovating to see how we can reach these people - experiments with video advice and greater community outreach, plus seeking to enhance our digital service offer to clients
- Trussell Trust partnership ensuring we use our combined reach to get food to more people



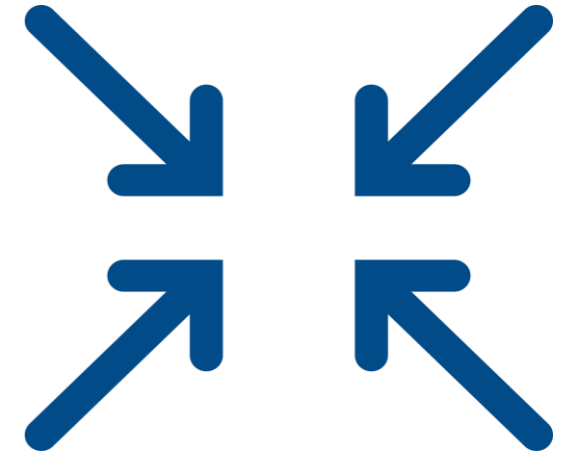
And concern that financial cliff edge leads to demand for debt advice surging

- In March/April 2020, 35% fewer clients sought help with a debt issue compared to the same period the previous year
- But when government support winds down that picture is likely to change
- We estimate over 13 million people have already been unable to pay, or expect to be unable to pay, at least one bill because of the coronavirus outbreak
 - We also estimate that it would take an average person that we help with debt problems at least 30 months to pay back just their priority debts, assuming that they spent their entire disposable income on repayments each month
- We're already seeing increased demand for advice on dealing with redundancy - and UC/benefits advice in high demand



Responding to the crisis in partnership

- Clients are likely to come to face more complex and severe issues, and we will need to adapt quickly to their needs
- Innovating and evolving our delivery model so that our telephony and digital advice capabilities can deal with demand, and so that they are accessible to our client base
- Partnering with other charities and corporates to maximise our reach and influence - and also so that we can learn from the expertise of others to help build our long term sustainability
 - Build relationships locally and nationally
 - Play to our strengths, share knowledge and expertise, and innovate
 - Seamless services - we need to work together to make things frictionless for clients/customers



Thank you



**Any
questions?**

Communicating with our partners and stakeholders

- We work with and keep up to date over 600 partners and stakeholders
- Last year we hosted our first Stakeholder Vulnerability Day for utility companies, housing associations, local councils, emergency services and charity organisations such as Age UK and Citizens Advice
- Trusted partnerships that focus on key outcomes which benefit customers directly



We promise uncompromising customer service that is tailored to your needs

BSI Inclusive
Service Standard

Member Institute of
Customer Service

June 2020 we
achieved 'AA'
Standard for
accessibility from the
Digital Accessibility
Centre (DAC)

Extended priority
services needs
codes

PSR Covid-19 flag

Online Priority
Services
registration

Online Social Tariff
application

Resilient Customer
Strategy

Cross utility
partnerships
PSR Promotion
Film

A growing network of third sector - statutory and non statutory
partners

The challenges of outcomes led partnerships

- Engaging hard-to-reach groups with partners
- Shaping and designing tools that support easy access to services
- Facilitating updates and briefing to already over stretched services
- Data barriers
- Locality working
- Local ownership of initiatives that support personal and community resilience

Responsiveness



To respond to new and emerging needs we need to work with our partners

To take risks and to provide flexible and innovative solutions

How can we better do this together?

We work with 600 partners and stakeholders and keeping them updated is crucial. As a key stakeholder yourself, what ways do you think are most effective when advising of important updates and insight?

Based on what we have shared with you today and the challenges we know you face when providing accessible services to more customers/service users – what are you doing to prepare for this?

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With so many organisations reaching out at this time (in order to support those you support), South East Water being one of them, what can we do to make this easier for you?

Open discussion

**What barriers can we remove
and what process can we
embed to ensure we get
support to your service users
without clogging up your time
and resources?**

Open discussion

We heard from Rob earlier who highlighted potential barriers for certain demographics/groups of service users.

What have you done in your organisation to remove these barriers, not just in regard to accessibility but also regarding equality and cultural accessibility/standards?

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In what ways are you willing to work with us to test and pilot our tools to make access easier for your service users across both digital and traditional platforms?

Open discussion

Time to break out

Rooms:

Winter campaign

Drought planning

Responsible business



Welcome back

Grab a quick drink.
We're re-starting at
11.37 for the
discussion.



Today you told us

Some great ways in which your organisation supported and will continue to support colleagues during lockdown. These include Pilates and yoga, coffee mornings, wellbeing programs, weekly team meetings/calls, mental health support and CEO updates.

There have been a great variety of organisations you have been/will be signposting to. These include Citizens Advice, Mind, food banks, KCC counselling and mental health champions.

Of the people coming to you for financial support you have told us:

- Furlough 71% (up from 62% on Tuesday's session up and 56% on yesterday's session)
- Self-employed 50%
- Redundancy 43% (down from 63% on yesterday's session and 48% on Tuesday's session)
- Food bank dependant 43%
- Existing benefit recipients 43% (up from 29% on Tuesday's session and 25% on yesterday's session)

Although digital platforms continue to prove popular for service users during the pandemic (email 71%, website 53%, social media 35%), interestingly the traditional method of telephone has been most popular with 88%.

You have told us that you believe the most effective communications methods when advising of important updates and insight are:

- Email 75%
- Virtual events 67%
- E-newsletter 63%

To prepare for the challenges we know you face when providing accessible services to more customers/service users, you have told us today that you will increase partnerships, share data, be more versatile and simplify robust IT systems.

To remove barriers, your organisations have created casework, partnerships, working with partner specialists, local approaches and proactive callouts.

Open discussion

Closing quiz

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Thank you

corporate.southeastwater.co.uk/vulnerabilityweek