

# YourVoice statement | 2021/22



## Who we are and what we do

We, the YourVoice panel, have been operating for around 10 years.

Our aim is to make sure United Utilities Water (the company) consults its customers and stakeholders (those with an interest in the company) to understand and take account of their views and priorities.

We make sure that engagement activities carried out by the company, such as consultations, surveys and research, are clear and understandable, and that the results are reflected in the company's business plans and how it delivers its services.

At every meeting we monitor the company's performance against its published performance targets, receive reports on ongoing improvement plans and review areas where performance falls short.

Our members represent customers, stakeholders, large and small businesses, regulators, the voluntary, charitable and environmental sectors, vulnerable communities and money and community advice services.

We are not all industry experts, so we act as informed customers and challenge the company on that basis. We are fully independent of the company.

The minutes of our meetings are published on the United Utilities website. During 2022 we will be establishing our own microsite where we will provide all relevant information on our work, including minutes of meetings, current consultations and a comprehensive record of the challenges we make.

We work on detailed matters through three subgroups:

- Customer engagement;
- Environment and social capital; and
- Affordability and vulnerability.

We will introduce another subgroup, Stakeholder, in June 2022.

The subgroup meetings allow members to use their skills to specialise in particular areas of the company's work and carry out detailed reviews of areas of interest or concern on behalf of customers.

The company's directors and senior staff regularly attend our meetings. We have regular access to the company's Chief Executive, main board, and the corporate responsibility committee of the board.

## Overview of performance for 2021/22

2021/22 is the second year of the company's current five-year business plan, which was widely discussed and the subject of extensive research and consultation with customers and stakeholders. In fact, over 142,000 North West household and business customers were directly consulted on this plan.

The company's performance shows many areas of good performance at or above target for the last year. However, 22% of targets have not been met.

Some areas where targets have not been met are as follows.

- **Per capita consumption** (the amount of water each person in our region uses each day)  
Consumption was slightly above the target of 140.3 litres per person, per day. The actual figure was 146.1 litres per person, per day. People being at home during the pandemic and activities such as more hand-washing will have affected this usage, so the company continues to communicate the need to save water through social media, advertising campaigns and initiatives such as increasing the uptake of water meters, the 'lowest bill guarantee' scheme and providing water-saving devices. It is important to always explain clearly to customers how they can save money, save water and help the environment, particularly in the context of the challenges of climate change.
- **Preventing flooding**  
Preventing flooding is a priority for customers and the company. In 2021/22 there were 1,023 incidents of flooding inside properties. This was higher than the target set. However, this is a 33% reduction on 2020/21. The company has continued to invest in a variety of schemes relating to things such as removal of surface water and increasing the capacity of sewers, as well as customer-focused campaigns like 'stop the block'. The company is starting to see the benefits of the additional investment in its dynamic network management programme. This programme helps the company to identify issues in the sewer network and to solve potential problems before they cause flooding incidents that affect customers and the environment. This work will continue and should improve the service in this area in the future.  
  
The number of external flooding incidents (flooding which occurred outside homes and businesses) reduced in 2021/22 and met the target.
- **Sewer blockages**  
There has been a lot of media coverage on what causes sewer blockages, highlighting fatbergs and misuse such as flushing wet wipes. This publicity, dynamic network management and increased resources have contributed to a 9% reduction in sewer blockages compared with 2020/21, but performance was 0.2% worse than the target. A customer information programme and tackling issues at the first sign of problems will continue in an effort to further reduce blockages.

You can find minutes of our 2021/22 meetings at [unitedutilities.com/corporate/about-us/performance/yourvoice](https://unitedutilities.com/corporate/about-us/performance/yourvoice)

- **Interruptions to supply**

The target for reducing water-supply interruptions was not met, even though this year was the second-best yearly performance ever. The 2021/22 performance has been affected by a number of large events, notably Storm Arwen and issues with a 36-inch water main in Prescot. The company has provided extra training for staff on ‘root cause analysis’ (identifying the primary cause of a problem in order to find a solution), which it hopes will improve performance. The ‘water on wheels’ vehicles continue to support customers and reduce the number of supply interruptions.

- **The appearance, taste and smell of water**

The number of contacts the company received from customers about the taste, smell and appearance of their water increased and did not meet the 2021 targets. There have been 17.9 contacts per 10,000 people, which is a slight increase on the previous year. An improvement plan is active and will address some of the causes of these contacts by targeting the replacement of old iron mains, mains cleaning, night maintenance flushing and so on. There have been early signs that performance in this area is improving following this work and we will be constantly monitoring this measure.

Some areas where performance targets have been met are as follows.

- 77,813 customers were lifted out of water poverty (where customers spend more than 3% of their disposable income on water and sewerage bills) through a range of affordability schemes.
- Over 3,500 lead-pipe replacements have been completed.
- 79% of customers interviewed said the company provided value for money.
- Targets for reducing leaks were achieved for the 16th year in a row.
- 2021/22 showed the lowest ever number of pollution incidents.
- On Ofwat’s customer-experience criteria, the company’s performance was 7th out of 17 water companies.
- 190,000 households registered for the company’s Priority Services scheme. This service has maintained its British Standard certification.
- Ongoing work to make sure everyone who receives water and wastewater services is identified and billed for those services has been successful. This helps to make bills fairer for all customers.
- Work to improve water pressure this year has seen 631 properties in Liverpool and 227 in Wirral removed from the low water pressure register.

This year the company has again produced an easy-to-read performance summary, which is available online and is accessible on mobile phones. It has received Plain English Campaign’s Crystal Mark, showing it has been approved for clarity.

An interactive presentation is also available online to help customers and stakeholders access and understand the company’s performance more easily. Social media continues to be used to share performance messages with more customers.

We are pleased to report that in our opinion, the United Utilities Annual Performance Report accurately reflects the company’s performance for 2021/22.

As ever, during the coming year we will continue to monitor and challenge the company on behalf of customers. If you would like to contact us about the company’s performance or our work, please email us at [myview@uuplc.co.uk](mailto:myview@uuplc.co.uk)

## Bernice Law

Independent Chair, YourVoice  
July 2022

