

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

CUSTOMER RESEARCH REPORT AND SYNTHESISED RECOMMENDATIONS

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
OBJECTIVES	4
APPROACH	4
SAMPLE	5
FINDINGS	7
<i>Customers' experience of our standards</i>	7
<i>How much to give</i>	14
<i>Reviewing the payments that we make under our Customer Charter</i>	26
<i>Customers' most important aspects of service, and how we can make up for getting them wrong</i>	32
<i>Digital contact methods</i>	35
RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS	39
APPENDIX 1: ONE-TO-ONE EMPLOYEE INTERVIEW GUIDE AND SHOW MATERIAL	47
APPENDIX 2: EMPLOYEE ONLINE SURVEY	58
APPENDIX 3: NW CUSTOMER ONLINE SURVEY	66

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESISED RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

We aim to get the services we provide to our customers right, first time, every time. This includes making and keeping appointments, keeping our customers informed during service failures and providing services to the very best of our abilities.

Our Company Customer Charter (CCC) and guaranteed standards are set out in [Our Promise to You](#), which consolidates, in customer friendly language, three sets of standards:

- **GSS** - These are set by Ofwat and must be paid when our customers experience specific service failures and when we fail to make the required payment within Ofwat's set timeframe
- **Enhanced GSS (EGSS)** - These are additional payments which we make voluntarily. They go further than the amounts required by Ofwat's GSS
- **Our customer service standards scheme** - An internal manual which brings together all GSS and EGSS payments plus guidance on discretionary payments made under our Customer Assurance Scheme. These are 'goodwill' payments which our Customer Advisors or Team Leaders may make when we have delivered service below expectation or the customer has experienced loss, damage or inconvenience

Our Promise to You, and the documents which inform it, have not been thoroughly reviewed for years. In light of Ofwat's November 2018 publication [Guaranteed Standards Scheme: Recommended changes to the UK Government](#), and the rising popularity of digital contact methods we have decided that this is an appropriate time to review Our Promise to You.

We engaged two main groups in this research; our people and our customers. This second report sets out the findings from our engagement with our customers. The Recommendations section compares the customer findings with the findings from our employees in Phase One.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESISED RECOMMENDATIONS

OBJECTIVES

The objectives for the customer phase of research were to understand customers’:

- Awareness that we pay compensation when things go wrong with our services
- Methods they are most likely to use to complain or request compensation
- Views on which poor service scenarios are most serious compared to others
- Expectations of our response when different poor service scenarios occur
- Views on which compensation amounts feel appropriate for different poor service scenarios
- Experiences and preferences on receiving payments and whether customers appear to value Enhanced GSS
- Views on which GSS should be enhanced, either with overpayments or reduced response timeframes, and to what level these should be set
- Expectations for how we communicate with them about compensation - particularly what our service standards around social media responses should be.

This report focuses on these findings, and they are compared and synthesised with findings from the employee phase in the Recommendations section.

APPROACH

Household customers were engaged through an online survey between 21 December 2020 and 9 January 2021, accessed via a direct invitation link from NW/ESW sent by email.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESISED RECOMMENDATIONS

SAMPLE

506 of our ESW and 825 of our NW (total = 1,331) customers completed the online survey. A random sample of approximately 30,000 who we held email addresses for who had not opted out of our research were invited to participate via email, and 1,823 began the survey. All completed answers have been considered for each question.

A minority (7%) of these customers (98 people) had ever received compensation from us (8% of NW and 5% of ESW customers) and 3% (47 people) were unsure whether they had or preferred not to say.

Customers were asked what they received compensation for. This was an open question, so responses have been categorised. The largest proportion of NW recipients (20) had received compensation for external or internal flooding, and 15 of all customers had experienced a billing issue. More than half of ESW respondents (13) and one in five NW respondents (14) had received compensation for a leak. The next highest proportion was for an overpaid bill¹ (six ESW and nine NW recipients) – usually relating to water meters. Other reasons included missed timescales, forgetting an action, missed appointments and failure to inform of planned works.

Reason for receiving compensation	NW	ESW
Sewer flooding	16	
Leak	8	12
Incorrect billing	9	6
Interruption	6	1
Discoloured water	5	
Blockage	5	
Missed timescale for reply	5	2
Internal sewer flooding	4	
Burst pipe	4	2
Leaky loo	4	1
Delay in meter fit	2	
Late meter (read or install)	4	
Failed to inform of interruption	1	
Forgot to do something	2	
Trespass	1	
Repeat sewer flooding	1	
Damage to garden	1	
Missed appointments	1	
Low water pressure	1	
Taste issue		1
Total respondents	67	25

¹ It was not clear from customer answers whether this was a refund or compensation.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESISED RECOMMENDATIONS

Demographic information was not collected in this survey and the sample was self-selecting (albeit only sent to those we held email addresses for). Therefore, the findings of this customer survey cannot be viewed as being statistically representative of the views of our customers.

It is likely from our experience of other digital projects in the last year that the views of over 75s and lower Socio-Economic Groups (C2DE) such as those whose main wage earner in their household works in manual and lower paid occupations/the unemployed are under-represented due to the entirely digital format. As we did not collect data about socio-economic group or age, we do not know how their views would have influenced the results.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESISED RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDINGS

The findings of the customer research are presented in this section. These are compared with and synthesised with the employee phase of the research in the Recommendations section. More detail on employees' views is contained in the Phase 1 report.

Customers' experience of our standards

The quantitative survey found that half (51%) of customers thought that we will pay compensation to a customer when something goes wrong, most of the remainder (43%) did not know or were unsure and 6% thought this was false. It should be noted that this question differed to the one asked of employees, which asked about awareness of our standards.

As could be expected, awareness among the 98 customers who said they had received compensation from us in the past was much higher, but still wasn't 100%. 79 (81%) thought we will pay it, 4 did not and 15 (15%) did not know.

Less than one in ten (7%) of the customers who completed our survey (98 people) had received compensation from us. Of those who had received compensation, the majority (two thirds) had not requested it but had received an automatic payment, 8% had requested it and 22% were offered it after making a complaint.

<i>Did you request compensation or receive an automatic payment?</i>	NWG
I didn't request compensation - NW/ESW made an automatic payment	62
I made a complaint and was then offered compensation	20
I specifically requested compensation	7
Don't know, unsure or prefer not to say	3

Base: 92

Half of customers would prefer us to inform them about a compensation payment via email. A third would prefer a letter. One in ten would like a phone call and 5% would accept a text message. 'Other ways' included more than one method (e.g. a phone call if the situation was ongoing or a letter to keep for their records).

<i>If we were going to pay you compensation, how would you want us to let you know?</i>	NWG
Send you an email	50%
Write you a letter	34%
Call you	10%
Send you a text message	5%
Send you a message on Facebook or Twitter	0%
Other way	1%

Base: 928

*Please note: small base size for ESW customers (23) due to an error in the survey set up

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESISED RECOMMENDATIONS

Three quarters of customers said they would prefer to receive compensation directly into their bank account, while nearly a quarter (24%) would prefer a credit on their water account. 'Other' responses included that it depends on the amount and that customers should be allowed to choose.

<i>If we were going to pay you compensation, how would you prefer to receive your payment?</i>	NWG
Directly into my bank account	75%
A credit to my water account	24%
Don't know, unsure or prefer not to say	1%
Another way (please describe)	1%

Base: 928

*Please note: small base size for ESW customers (23) due to an error in the survey set up

In terms of how compensation was received by customers, more than three quarters of recipients reported experiencing a positive emotion when they had received their compensation. Around one in four reported more neutral feelings like surprise (although these were generally of the positive kind). However, the payment made 9% of recipients feel negative.

<i>How did receiving compensation make you feel?</i>	NWG
Pleased/happy/good	29%
Satisfied/fine/ok/appropriate/relieved/justified/heard	23%
Surprised / shocked / impressed	17%
Valued	10%
Like we cared	10%
Better	7%
Grateful / appreciative	4%
Not very good / still angry	4%
Would rather have not had to complain	2%
Unnecessary / use to improve infrastructure/service instead	2%

Base: 92

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESISED RECOMMENDATIONS

Customer quotes about how compensation made them feel included:

Like a valued customer

As if you cared about us as customers, and appreciated we sometimes get things wrong.

Great, when all things were balanced out it left an overall positive impression of Northumbrian Water. This is still my impression today.

Shocked and surprised that a company would pay compensation for not getting back to a customer in a specified time frame.

Given the amount of time wasted resolving the issue, it felt appropriate to be compensated in some way.

Acknowledgement for inconvenience of having to go back to the bank twice.

Satisfied Northumbrian Water took time to realise what customer suffered with smell and sewage. compensation for incompetence is not very satisfactory.

I felt you could have invested that money in your infrastructure which would put it to better use.

Still fuming, as it was Friday night just before I was getting ready to go to a party.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESISED RECOMMENDATIONS

When asked to rate how satisfactory receiving compensation was as an end to their issue out of ten (where 1 was very satisfactory and 10 was a very unsatisfactory end to the issue experienced), recipients gave an average of 3.54 out of ten.

The main reasons given by recipients for high satisfaction ratings included that the compensation was unexpected (half who answered said this) or because the issue was resolved fast. Reasons for low satisfaction ratings included because the problem was still unresolved, and that the issue should never have happened.

Quotes included:

Happy with the result and also happy to receive subsequent refund once the situation had been settled.

They only charged me the average payment for a household of my size and paid compensation for the rest of the bill.

The tap hadn't been used in years, I was just pleased it got repaired the same day.

Not Northumbrian Water's fault.

Full cost met.

As much as I happily accepted the compensation I wasn't expecting or aware that this would happen if I did not receive a reply in the specified time scale. Do customers really need compensation for a delayed response unless this is a more serious issue. That the customer is needing a response about.

The remedial work was not to an acceptable standard. No other compensation was given.

Was a fixed amount – Didn't take into account the specifics of the situation.

The hassle this causes older people should be taken more into consideration.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESISED RECOMMENDATIONS

In the survey, three quarters of the 92 customers who thought they had received compensation before remembered the approximate amount. Some mentioned that it was many years ago.

More than half of recipients had received less than £150. The most frequent amount received was less than £20.

Amount received (approximately)	NWG	% (excluding 'Don't remember's)
up to £20	15	20%
21-50	10	13%
51-100	11	15%
101-150	9	12%
151-200	8	11%
201-300	2	3%
301+	6	8%
One month's bill	2	3%
Leak allowance	5	7%
Gift	2	3%
Don't remember	5	7%
Total recipients	75	70

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESISED RECOMMENDATIONS

When asked to rate how reasonable and proportionate the amount of compensation customers had received felt out of ten (where 1 was the most reasonable and proportionate and 10 the least), recipients gave an average of 3.5.

NW recipients gave a worse score (3.8) than ESW recipients (2.7).

Reasons for ratings included:

- That the payment was unexpected;
- Unnecessary because it wasn't our fault;
- A fair refund;
- Because the issue was still unresolved, and
- A fixed amount didn't cover their full costs such as lost time, destroyed belongings or stress caused.

Quotes included:

Living at what seems to be the end of the line, as far as the water main is concerned, we have a lot more interruptions and problems to our water supply. Also, this is the first time we have been on a water meter, already installed before the property. If it had been possible I would have had it removed before completion of purchase.

Sort the problem. It will not get better giving us money. We need a pipe that will take the flow (it needs to be bigger than the drain that is coming into it) and that's what your multiple surveys say - and so will the next one after we get flooded with sewage again.

It did reoccur but was fixed eventually.

Yes, but really just getting it fixed was satisfactory.

Great gesture.

Was surprised to receive compensation.

When customers were asked in the survey what they would most like us to do to put things right if we got anything wrong with their services, the majority (61%) selected 'fix the problem'. Only around one in six (16%) selected compensation.

Some selected credit instead of cash. This could be explained by which scenario they had top of mind, i.e. cash for large amounts of compensation they would need to pay for other things, and credit for smaller amounts which would help them day to day with their water bill.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESISED RECOMMENDATIONS

Only 6% of customers said that they would most want an apology to put things right. Customers mostly (77% of ‘Something else’) used the ‘Something else’ option to say that they would not accept only one option. For example, they would expect us to fix the problem, compensate and apologise. The remainder said that it would depend on the circumstances/scenario.

<i>If we got something wrong with your services what would you most like us to do to put things right?</i>	NWG
Fix the problem	61%
Pay compensation into your bank account	16%
Credit your water account	11%
Apologise	6%
Something else	5%
Don't know, unsure or prefer not to say	1%

Base: 928 *Please note: small base size for ESW customers (23) due to an error in the survey set up

Quotes included:

Nil. Just refund excess payment.

Reflective of their outstanding balance of over-estimated to help them foot the unexpected cost. If under estimated nothing but an immediate refund of credit.

Equivalent to the amount overcharged plus 30% for inconvenience.

If you can't gain access to get a meter read, then £0 compensation. If it is Northumbrian Water's fault, £25 is sufficient.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESISED RECOMMENDATIONS

How much to give

Customers were asked to imagine that they oversaw our compensation payments. For six scenarios, they were asked whether they thought the payments we currently make felt reasonable and proportionate. If they disagreed, they were asked what the compensation should be.

More than half of customers agreed with our current compensation arrangements for estimated bills for metered customers, repeat supply interruptions and erroneous CCJs. Less than half of customers agreed with the current compensation amounts for blocked access and discoloured water. And only just over a third (37%) agreed with the current payment for internal flooding due to burst mains. There were however some assumptions behind these views, which became evident when customers who did not agree with the amounts explained why.

Scenario	Current compensation	Feels reasonable and proportionate
<i>A customer on a water meter has received bills that aren't based on actual meter reads for over a year</i>	£20	62%
<i>A customer has had their water supply interrupted for a total of 18 hours over the course of a year</i>	£20	55%
<i>We've issued a county court judgment against a customer in error</i>	£150	53%
<i>We've blocked access to a customer's home to carry out work without letting them know in writing</i>	£20	47%
<i>A customer on a water meter has brown, orange or black water coming out of their taps</i>	£6 on average (equivalent to the cost of 5,000 litres of water)	46%
<i>One of our water mains has burst and flooded the inside of a customer's home</i>	£100-£1,000 (up to the cost of the customer's annual water charge)	37%

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESISED RECOMMENDATIONS

Of those who disagreed with the compensation amounts, customers were asked what amount they would prefer. Many customers did not give a value, but rather their principles for determining a value. The ranges of values suggested for each scenario are shown on the charts below (minimum, lower quartile, median, upper quartile and maximum).

Unsurprisingly, flooding from a main was awarded the highest payments by customers. This was mainly because of its very high and long-term impact on the customer, but also partially because customers thought it was unfair for them to have to claim on household insurance policies, or that they wanted their insurance excess covered. The main reason some customers suggested lower compensation payments for this scenario was because they assumed that their insurance and/or we would already cover the costs of repair and replacement.

Quotes about flooding from a main compensation amounts included:

Appropriate to the damage caused.

It should be circumstance dependent...The compensation should be the entire value of the cost to put the property back to its original state - People can't take the mick, but while people have home insurance, they shouldn't be forced to up their premiums through no fault of their own.

Any excess on the insurance and anything that is not covered by insurance.

Customers should not have to use their household insurance for this.

Assessed by an insurance company.

Cover the excess on the customer's home insurance at the very least. £100 goodwill gesture on top of paying the excess. Flooding somebody's home would be unbearably stressful, especially for someone with children or vulnerable adults. If the damage is so significant they cannot stay at the property, you could offer to cover a hotel stay too.

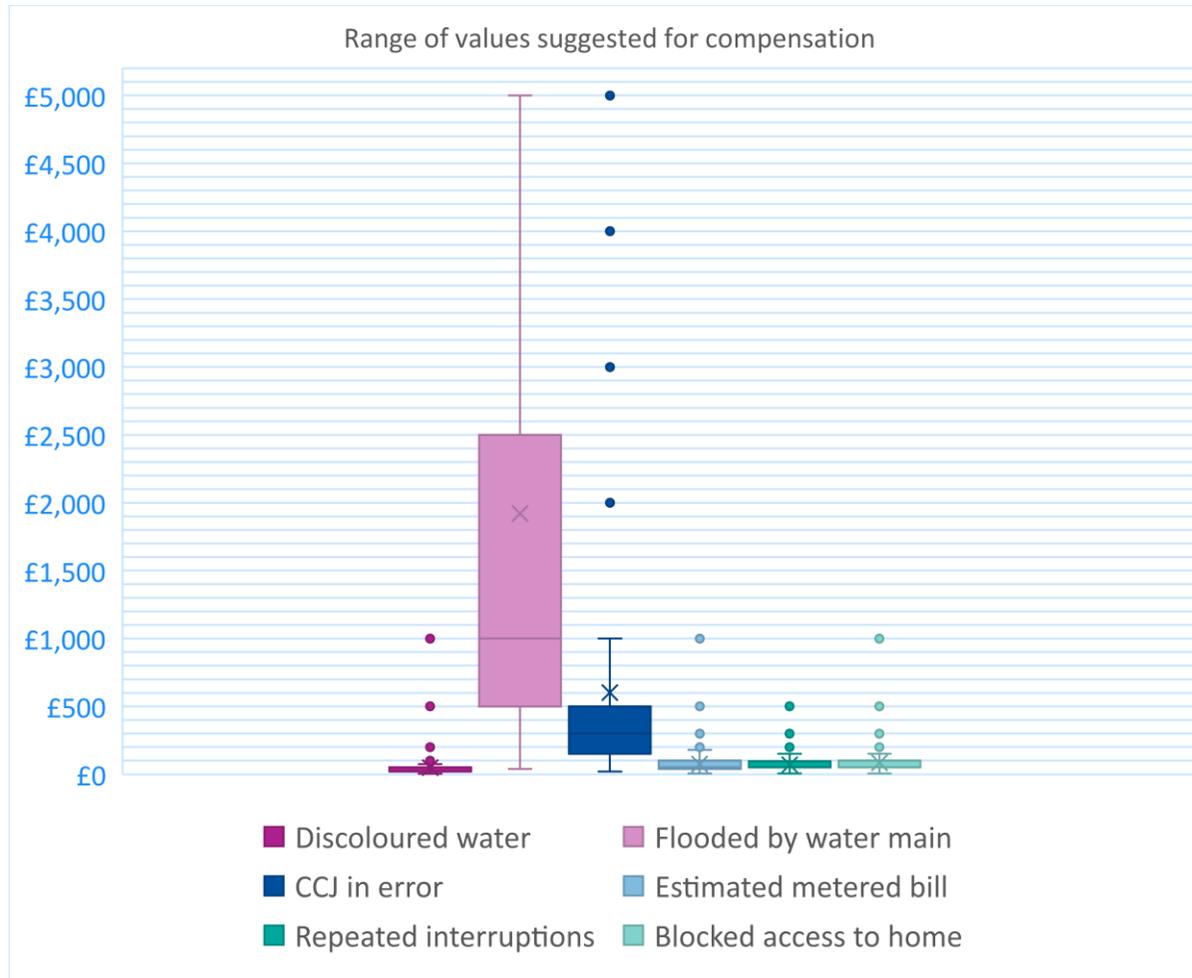
I can't see why a correlation with annual charge is at all relevant here. Your problem should be put right by you. Compensation should be the cost to put right the home plus any related costs (accommodation elsewhere etc).

I've experienced the damage and distress from flooding - You should pay all costs to restore as was plus the £1000.

Whatever the cost of putting it right is.

The charts below show the minimum, maximum, median (x), upper and lower quartile (top and bottom edges of each box) values for the compensation amounts that customers suggested.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESISED RECOMMENDATIONS

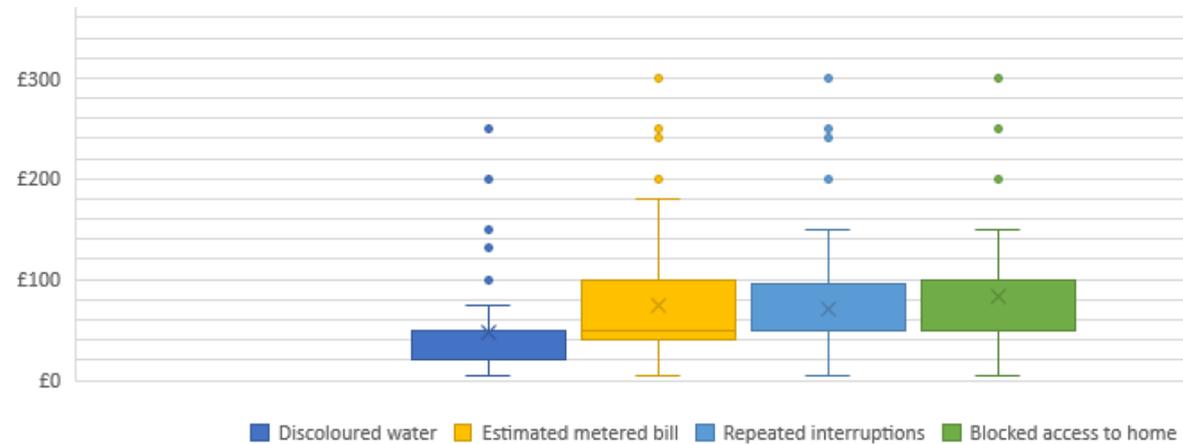


Base sizes are 370; 230; 277; 219; 256, and 200 consecutively with the legend on the chart.

N.B. Maximum outlier values are not included on this chart for flooding (£10,000) or CCJs (£15,000).

A detailed view of the scenarios awarded lower payments by customers is shown below. They are broadly similar ranges, except for discoloured water, which is noticeably lower.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESISED RECOMMENDATIONS



Most customers who did not consider our current payments reasonable and proportionate suggested alternative compensation values for nearly every service issue. The exception to this was the scenario of estimated bills for metered customers, where more than half wanted the difference between actual and estimated charges to be refunded or waived (or a gentle payment plan offered) completely rather than compensation paid. Nonetheless, 40% of those who disagreed with our payment levels (around a fifth of all customers) still wanted a compensation payment on top.

While most of customers supported our flat fee to compensate for repeated interruptions, discoloured water or erroneous CCJs, a significant proportion (between a fifth and a third) said that the amount should depend upon the circumstances of the situation. These included the number of occasions the problem had occurred for the customer, whether they were vulnerable in any way, the duration of the issue and the amount of effort and stress that had happened to the customer, for example they may have had to miss work.

Quotes included:

Zero - what is the point? Spend money fixing root cause - we have created a compensation culture in the UK which is not healthy.

Depends on extent of stress and harm caused.

Plus the cost of any bottled water purchased.

Dependent on how long the problem persists.

The inconvenience would be huge.

£20 PER occasion.

Depends how long for each time.

If it was interrupted for example overnight and did not disturb them then I wouldn't think there is a need for compensation.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESISED RECOMMENDATIONS

Particularly when it came to County Court Judgments made in error, customers wanted all out of pocket costs the customer had consequently suffered to be paid. This could include being turned down for jobs or missing out on a mortgage, and even compensation for emotional distress. One even cited domestic abuse where someone may be unable to move out as an example.

Customer quotes about CCJs included:

£1000 because the worry of this type of action can be devastating. It may also make you double check before starting such action.

£200 plus ensuring their name is cleared for all credit reference agencies.

100% ensure the CCJ is entirely cleared from their credit file / records plus one year's free water or compensation equal to the same amount (CCJ could be very stressful and emotionally upsetting) so formal written apology, assurances ref credit file / score plus compensation of £150 plus any expenses the customer had to incur and can provide evidence for.

Based on how the CCJ affected the credit rating of the customer. If it prevented he or she from obtaining a mortgage, the consequences to that person could be widespread.

When I was working a judgment against me could have had a devastating impact on my employment.

That plus a legal document that makes it clear it was an error on your part. This could seriously have detrimental consequences if customer is unable to prove the judgement was made in error.

Service issue	Compensation payment	Refund/ waive charges	Proportion of bill	Depends on circumstances / negotiated	Award all costs	More / a multiple of our amount	Zero	Other	Base
Repeated interruptions	61% (256)		4%	20%		4%	7%	4%	422
Discoloured water	60% (370)	4%	3%	23%		4%	4%	1%	616
CCJ	59% (277)		2%	11%	5%	7%	17%	1%	471
Blocked access	45% (200)		2%	31%		3%	16%	4%	448
Estimated metered bill	40% (219)	54%	7%	6%		4%	1%	2%	541
Flooded by burst main	26% (230)		1%	2%	84%	1%			894

N.B.: Percentages may not add up to 100% where customers mentioned more than one category.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESISED RECOMMENDATIONS

In the survey, customers were asked to rank how seriously they perceived four scenarios that could occur within each of three directorates. The first set of scenarios about Customer Services is shown below, compared with employee ranks.

The most seriously ranked scenario by both employees and customers was taking three weeks to call a customer back about their bill, followed by repeatedly unclear advice, both of which we make payments for. Employees saw being on hold for 12 minutes as worse than waiting more than a week for a reply to a letter about billing, customers felt the opposite.

The range of average (mean) scores was quite narrow. This means that customers' rankings differed. They also struggled to judge some scenarios as significantly more serious than others. This is evidenced by the explanations many customers gave for their scores.

For the customer service scenarios, more than one in ten (12%) customers took the opportunity to say that they would have ranked them all as equally serious if they could, or that they would need more information about the circumstances to be able to rank them.

More based on their circumstances.

Proportionate to their needs.

Decided on how quickly and easily you resolved rather than a standard amount.

If I could, I would've ranked the 3 most serious answers equally.

I would have put most serious on them all, as bad service is terrible.

These are all serious problems. If this is your current state of affairs, you need to fire your management and get better people. You also need to invest in your customer services. I ranked these based on most serious to least, but these are all top tier problems.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESISED RECOMMENDATIONS

Scenario	What we currently do	Customer average (mean) rank	Customer reasons for ranks	Employee rank
<i>You've telephoned us about your bill. We promise to call you back and take three weeks to do so.</i>	EGSS payment of £20	Most serious (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential financial and emotional impact on the customer (as a bill issue) • Expect a fast response to a telephone call. • Broken promise and lack of respect shown resonated with customers on an emotional level. 	Most serious (1)
<i>You've rung us five times in the past six months and each time you've felt that the advice wasn't clear.</i>	Request a good will payment.	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would only ring if it was urgent. • Not getting a resolution within a day or two could cause anxiety and stress. • Would erode trust in our competence and feel like we didn't respect them. 	2
<i>Eight days ago, you sent us a letter asking to change the way you pay and haven't heard back from us yet.</i>	GSS payment of £20	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Billing issues should be responded to promptly due to the impact they may have on customers' finances and the stress this could cause. • However, many would expect a longer wait when communicating via post or would not expect a response at all – just for it to be done. • This contrasted with our employees' assessment, which ranked this as the least serious customer service scenario. 	Least serious (4)
<i>You've telephoned us and have been on hold waiting to speak to someone for 12 minutes.</i>	Apologise for their wait.	Least serious (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nearly one in six (15%) said it was a relatively short wait compared to other utilities and broader providers. • Expect to wait, unless it was an emergency. • Would be even less serious if we had a call back facility, automated functions or a system so that customers knew their likely wait time. • Contrasts with our employees' assessment. 	3

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESISED RECOMMENDATIONS

When customers were asked to rank the Water scenarios in the survey, they gave the following ranks, compared with employees. Being without water for 10 hours was considered most serious by employees and customers, next was the cost incurred due to poor advice. It's interesting that the most seriously ranked issue (10-hour uninformed interruption) is not one that we would make a payment for, and that we pay compensation for the lowest ranked issue (missed appointment due to emergency works).

10% of customers said they were all equally serious when they explained their rankings (They were unable to rank any of them equally.). Examples of these comments include:

I accept that sometimes things cannot always be under our control - things happen. However, if I make an appointment, I expect it to be kept. My time is just as important as yours. The attitude that the customer does not matter is unacceptable.

As previous, very difficult to answer.

These are all very serious problems and should all be at rank 1.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESISED RECOMMENDATIONS

Scenario	What we currently do	Customer average (mean) rank	Customer reasons for rankings	Employee rank
<i>A water main near your home has burst. We're fixing it but so far you've been without water for 10 hours.</i>	No payment expected.	1 (Most serious)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being without water has a very serious impact (children and disabilities mentioned). Many understood that 'emergencies happen' and did not blame us However, they would expect us to communicate with them and provide an alternative water supply within a few hours. 	1 (Most serious)
<i>On our advice you've paid a plumber to fix a problem with your water supply. When they investigate they find that the problem is actually our responsibility to fix.</i>	Request goodwill payment.	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential financial impact on the customer. Expect advice which is right first time. Would expect us to reimburse the plumber's fee. 	3
<i>Tomorrow we will turn your water off for five hours to do some routine maintenance. You haven't been told in writing.</i>	£20 GSS payment.	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assumed that we had informed them by an alternative route such as text message or phone or would have been more serious. Would expect more notice so that they could plan for the interruption. 	2
<i>You have an appointment booked today for us to check an issue with the taste of your tap water. We call you to cancel because emergency works needs to take priority.</i>	£20 EGSS payment	4 (Least serious)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergencies should take priority At least we called to cancel Only an inconvenience. Some aware that taste may not reflect water safety. However, a small minority mentioned their health concerns about drinking water. 	4 (Least serious)

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESISED RECOMMENDATIONS

When customers were asked to rank the wastewater scenarios in the survey, they gave the following ranks, with sewer flooding most serious, followed by a wait for us to attend after rainwater flooding then us advising them to pay an independent drain specialist when it was in fact our responsibility. Too few employees selected these scenarios for rankings to be provided for comparison.

8% said in their explanation that some were equally serious, but they were unable to rank any of them equally. Customer quotes included:

All problems should be dealt with as quickly as possible.

I wouldn't like any of these experiences.

I would have these all as 1s and 2s, but it won't let me. Mainly because it's actually affecting our property and something that would require urgent attention.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW
CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESISED RECOMMENDATIONS

Scenario	What we currently do	Customer average (mean) rank	Customer reasons for rankings
<i>The inside of your home has been flooded with sewage.</i>	Make a payment equal to the customer's full sewerage charge for the year or pay £150, whichever is more (up to a maximum of £1,000).	1 (Most serious)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk to health. • Damage to property – some of which would be irreplaceable. • Major inconvenience caused to the customer for a long period to get their property repaired or replaced. • Very few saw this as forgivable or an act of god.
<i>It has been raining heavily and your home has been flooded. You've reported it to us but feel the need to call back about the length of time it is taking us to attend your home.</i>	Apologise and explain the delay	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing damage to the property. • Emotional distress. • They should have been told how long to expect to wait.
<i>On our advice you've paid a drainage specialist to fix a problem with your drains. When they investigate they find that the problem is actually our responsibility to fix.</i>	We may reimburse the customer for the costs incurred	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some blamed us for our poor advice. • No obvious immediate impact. • They would claim back the cost.
<i>You've called us to report a smelly drain at the front of your house. Fifteen days later we call you back to arrange a visit.</i>	If the customer was unhappy when they reported the drain, £50 would be paid for our failure to respond to their complaint within 10 working days	4 (Least serious)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No immediate impact • But we should have informed them when we would attend.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESISED RECOMMENDATIONS

Customers felt that issues that could affect their health, damage to property and long-term major inconvenience, as well as the emotional stress this would cause, made scenarios more serious:

Flooding with sewage would be so damaging and extremely upsetting.

Sewage is hazardous to health so needs dealing with ASAP. Flooding from rain water, whilst inconvenient, isn't as dangerous.

Flooding should always be seen as extremely urgent. When you pay for a service you expect to be helped in your hour of need.

Depends on response time for real now emergencies.

Issues need to be sorted promptly to stop it escalating into a major event.

When customers had paid out in error, they would expect to be able to claim back their costs. Quotes included:

I would claim back costs if I'd incorrectly paid out.

I'm making the assumption that you would refund money paid out to a third party in error. If that isn't the case, then I would move it up to more serious.

Parallels can be drawn between the sewer flooding and water main flooding scenarios discussed earlier. It may be that we need to review the payments for flooding incidents in wastewater.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

Reviewing the payments that we make under our Customer Charter

Customers were presented with six scenarios² and asked the most *important* thing we could do to “put things right” for a customer who had experienced any of them. Employees were presented with ten scenarios.

A summary of customer and employee views is set out in the following table. The detail behind customers’ thinking is covered over the following pages. The results for the additional four scenarios that employees ranked can be found in the employee findings report for Phase 1.

Scenario	What we currently do	Summary of employees’ views	Summary of customers’ views				
			Pay compensation into their bank account	Credit their water account	Fix the problem	Apologise	Something else
<i>A customer on a water meter has received bills that aren’t based on actual meter reads for over a year.³</i>	An automatic payment of £20	✓ Majority felt appropriate and proportionate.	25%	34%	34%	6%	1%

²None of which related solely to wastewater.

³ Employee version was: A metered customer hasn't had a bill based on an actual meter read for over a year and there are no access issues.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

Scenario	What we currently do	Summary of employees' views	Summary of customers' views				
			Pay compensation into their bank account	Credit their water account	Fix the problem	Apologise	Something else
<i>A customer on a water meter had brown, orange or black water coming out of their taps. We asked them to leave the tap running for 30 minutes to clear it.⁴</i>	The customer's account is credited with an amount equivalent to five cubic metres. (Equivalent to running a tap for one hour).	✓ The majority of employees felt that this is appropriate and proportionate.	10%	39%	39%	10%	1%
<i>We've blocked access to a customer's home to carry out work without letting them know in writing.⁵</i>	An automatic payment of £20	? A small majority of employees felt that this is appropriate and proportionate.	18%	12%	31%	38%	2%

⁴ Employee version was: A customer on a metered supply calls us to report that their water is discoloured. We ask them to run their tap until the water is clear.

⁵ Employee version was: A customer's access to their property is restricted because of planned work which they were not advised about.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

Scenario	What we currently do	Summary of employees' views	Summary of customers' views				
			Pay compensation into their bank account	Credit their water account	Fix the problem	Apologise	Something else
<i>A customer has had their water supply interrupted for a total of 18 hours over the course of a year.⁶</i>	An automatic payment of £20	? A small majority of employees felt that this is appropriate and proportionate.	20%	36% Issue relates to their water supply. Would not cost them very much.	29%	14%	1%

⁶ Employee version was: In a 12-month period, a customer has experienced unplanned interruptions totalling more than 18 hours which have not individually qualified for a GSS payment.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

Scenario	What we currently do	Summary of employees' views	Pay compensation into their bank account	Summary of customers' views			
				Credit their water account	Fix the problem	Apologise	Something else
<i>One of our water mains has burst and flooded the inside of a customer's home.⁷</i>	We pay the customer's full annual water charge or £100, whichever is more (Max £1,000)	X A minority of employees felt that this is appropriate and proportionate.	59% High financial impact on the customer's life, e.g. replacing goods and repairing their home requires large amounts of cash rather than water credits.	2%	35%	2%	2%

⁷ Employee version was: A customer's living area has been flooded with water from a main.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

Scenario	What we currently do	Summary of employees' views	Summary of customers' views				
			Pay compensation into their bank account	Credit their water account	Fix the problem	Apologise	Something else
<i>A county court judgment has been issued against a customer in error.⁸</i>	An automatic payment of £150	? A small majority of employees felt that this is appropriate and proportionate.	46%				
			High financial impact on the customer's life. Ensure that all impact on their credit rating has been nullified, and any financial consequences have been compensated.	7%	28%	16%	3%

⁸ Employee version was: A customer has had a County Court Judgment or Credit Default issued against them, by us, in error. We immediately reversed the judgment and any fees entered on their account.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

For each of the six customer scenarios, between three and four in ten customers selected fixing the problem as the most important thing. Quotes included:

I can't believe fix the problem is one of the options - surely that is a given. The others should be in order, apology and compensation depending on seriousness of problem.

*Put it right means move. I'm disabled. If you blocked my route of access, then giving me token compensation will not reflect the addition pain and fatigue you've put me in.
Sort it out AND apologise.*

Customers were most likely to select paying compensation as the most important thing we could do when we had flooded a customers' home from our clean water main – three in five did so. This reflects the high financial impact on other areas of the customer's life than their water supply and the stress caused. For example, replacing goods and repairing their home would require large amounts of cash:

Customers should be reimbursed for loss due to service failure.

Fix the problem first, examine condition of rest of water main and pay to put back as was the customers home with compensation for trouble caused.

Nearly half of customers also selected compensation for erroneous county court judgments. For the other scenarios, a minority (10% - 25%) thought compensation was the most important thing.

A simple apology would not be enough. You should also do your utmost to ensure the customer's credit rating has not been compromised and offer them some compensation for the distress caused.

If a judgement has been wrongly obtained, this should be removed and a grovelling apology written on the customer's credit record, as well as ++ compo for hassle distress and upset.

Customers were more likely to select credits to their water account for issues relating to their water supply that would not cost them very much. These scenarios included estimated bills for metered customers, repeated interruptions, blocked access and discoloured water incidents. More than a third of customers selected credits to their accounts for each of these issues:

*If it's a water meter, the customer has the means to put it right themselves by giving a meter reading to you.
Provide the service that is being paid for, or if a lesser service is being provided, then a lesser fee should be charged.*

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

A minority of customers thought that an apology would be the most important action. This was most often selected for the repeat interruptions (14%), CCJ (16%) and discoloured water scenarios (10%):

Instant apology and let the customer know how you will fix the problem or manage it in the short term.

237 customers chose to explain their selection of the most important priority for action. Half of these used this open question to state that they thought that more than one action was required, or that their answer would depend upon the details of each scenario, i.e. seriousness/duration of the issue or circumstances of the customer (e.g. vulnerable). Others added additional requirements, which included:

- Explain how the issue will be fixed and keep the customer informed of progress.
- Act very quickly to resolve the issue.
- Check that the problem has been fixed with the customer.
- Ensure that we learn from our mistakes.

Customers' most important aspects of service, and how we can make up for getting them wrong

At the end of the survey, customers were asked what the most important thing about the services they receive from us was. More than a third (38%) mentioned a supply of clean, good quality and/or safe water. This was closely followed by reliability of our services on 28% (most often referring to water supply). An additional 4% mentioned related issues like good maintenance and no issues.

Clear, easy communication (14%) and how promptly or punctually we respond to issues or queries (also 14%) were also important to customers, who also mentioned 'good customer service' more generally (12%) and our ability to fix issues and answer queries (12%). Value for money was also chosen by 7% of customers. Honesty, trust and transparency were cited as the most important things by 5% of customers.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

<i>When it comes to the services that I receive from Northumbrian Water/Essex & Suffolk Water, the one thing that is most important to me is:</i>	NWG
Clean / good quality / safe water	38%
Reliability / consistency / continuity /uninterrupted service	28%
Clear, easy, proactive communication (speak to a human on the phone)	14%
Speed / timely / prompt / punctuality	14%
Fix issues / answer queries	12%
Good customer service (friendly, helpful, polite, professional)	12%
Value for money	7%
General good or quality service	6%
Good drainage/Wastewater service (*NW only)	5% ⁹
Honesty / trust / transparency	5%
Not having to contact us / no issues / good maintenance	4%
Accurate bills (Ensure meters read)	3%
Correct responses / advice	3%
Efficiency	3%
Fairness	1%

Base: 1,397

Following this, customers were asked how they'd expect us to put things right, if we got their most important aspect of our services wrong.

Again, the majority would expect us to fix the issue. A third mentioned compensation. It should be noted that many of the 33% who selected compensation expected this to be an *offer or discussion* to make it proportionate to the impact on the customer, rather than an automatic payment. They wanted us to understand the situation sufficiently, and perhaps have a chance for personal contact and empathy.

Most of the problems are caused by poor communication with the customer.

⁹ This proportion and ranking is identical when only considering NW customers.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

Quicker responses and customer contact. Most people just need reassurance issues are being tackled.

In addition, a significant proportion (16%) acknowledged that compensation is not always appropriate:

Apologise, explain the reason and offer compensation if appropriate.

More than a quarter (28%) expect an apology:

Speak to me in person and firstly offer an apology.

The same proportion as expected an apology (28%) mentioned they'd expect a fast response from us. More than one in ten (13%) also expected us to keep them informed of progress. Almost one in ten (8%) mentioned they expected us to investigate and put processes in place to ensure it didn't happen again. Some customers also wanted us to explain why it happened, what would happen next or give advice.

If Northumbrian Water got the thing that's most important to me wrong, this is what I'd expect them to do to put it right:	NWG %
Fix it/ restore normal service	61%
Compensate me / offer / discuss compensation	33%
Apologise	28%
Speed	28%
Compensate if appropriate/ proportionate to impact (i.e. not a nominal figure)	16%
Keep me informed/ communicate progress	13%
Investigate/learn from it to prevent future occurrence/ more staff/ training	8%
Explain reason/how will fix / give advice	5%
Written correspondence	2%
Supply alternative service (e.g. bottled water; bowser)	2%
Revise prices	1%

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

Base: 1,331

The answers to these questions warrant more detailed analysis. For example, grouping how to put things right by the most important aspect for the customer. The raw, anonymised data will be sent to the customer team for further analysis.

Digital contact methods

Our current version of 'Our Promise to You' focuses on telephone and written contact.

Almost two thirds (63%) of customers stated that they would look on one of our websites if they wanted to find out how to ask us for compensation and 29% would call us.

Customers are slightly more likely to call us to make a complaint (40% would). Nevertheless, more than half (55%) of customers would use online methods to make a complaint (38% would email us, and 17% would use the online chat options on our websites). Only seven customers said they would use other means, and these included Citizens Advice, solicitors and Facebook Messenger.

When we asked customers in the survey whether we should guarantee response times for customers who complain by social media, views were polarised. Around half said we should, a third disagreed and 17% did not know.

Facebook and Twitter were the social media platforms that customers most frequently selected to have guaranteed response times for messages.

<i>Which social media platforms do you think we should guarantee response times for? (Please tick as many as you think)</i>	NWG customers
Facebook	35%
Twitter	27%
Instagram	14%
Don't know, unsure or prefer not to say	31%
None*	13%
Other	1%

Base: 1,689 household customers

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

*13% of customers used the 'Other' text box to state that we shouldn't use social media for such matters. These were recoded as 'None' above. (None was not an option in the original survey.) Only a handful of customers suggested other social media channels (WhatsApp, SMS, MySpace and Facebook Messenger, as well as Webchat).

Almost two thirds (63%) of all customers said that, if we had a guaranteed response time for social media, this should be within three days – half of these said within 24 hours. A quarter of respondents did not answer this question or stated that we shouldn't have guaranteed response times for social media.

<i>If you think we should guarantee response times for customers who contact us on social media, what length of time would be reasonable? Please bear in mind we only monitor social media from 7am to 8pm.</i>	NWG customers
Within an hour	5%
Between one to five hours	11%
By the end of the day that you contacted us	17%
Between one and three days	29%
Within a week	10%
Longer than a week	1%
Other	3%
Do not guarantee any length of time on social media / I don't use it	6%
Don't know, unsure or prefer not to say	19%

Base: 1,418 household customers

Responses in the "other" category included:

- 18 who said 'Within 24 hours;'
- Nine who said they should be the same for social media as for other means of written communication, such as email;
- Six customers who said the response time should depend on the urgency of the issue, and
- Three who said within 12 hours.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

This must depend on the nature of the issue.

If your company is serious about including social media as a communication vehicle then there should be parity across the board in terms of compensation. These customers should be treated the same as though they were writing or calling in to your company.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

Compensation for late response to digital contact

Less than a quarter (24%) of customers thought we should pay compensation if we fail to respond to customers who contact us by social media within our guaranteed response time. Nearly half (47%) thought we should not and 29% did not have an opinion.

Among the customers who agreed that we should pay compensation for slow responses on social media, the most popular fee was £20 (stated by one fifth – 21%). However, a similar proportion (22%) thought the fee should be higher, and 20% also thought the fee should be lower. 15% of those who thought a fee should be paid said that it should not be a flat fee but should depend upon the circumstances (such as the impact on the customer or the urgency of the situation). It's important to remember here that only a quarter of respondents thought there should be any compensation for this at all.

Amount of compensation, if agree	NWG
Less than £5	1%
£5	7%
£10	10%
£15	1%
£20	21%
£25	5%
£30-40	3%
£50-75	9%
£100	4%
More than £100	1%
1 month's bill	2%
Depends on seriousness of issue / impact	15%
Same as for telephone or email contact	4%
Per day /hour	6%

Base: 282

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Recommendations

Customers' experience of our standards

1. Most employees felt that the average customer is **unaware that they will receive compensation for various failures**. This perception appears to be accurate for about half of our customers, based on the customer survey. Many were surprised to receive payments, or would prefer an apology in some situations, and the impact of the compensation appears to be reduced if awarded automatically without any personal interaction from us.

Therefore, we should improve our communications surrounding payments.

2. **Customers tend to be more interested in receiving an operational resolution to their issue than compensation**, as employees stated. In some cases, customers find the payment amounts trivial and feed back to us that they didn't need or expect it, were satisfied with the outcome or apology given, or would rather we invest the money elsewhere.

In line with employees' views, customers rarely proactively request compensation and the highest priority for customers was to fix their problem as soon as possible (resolution). Some customers suggested that they would expect much faster resolutions depending on the circumstances, e.g. whether the issue was ongoing like flooding, CCJs, billing problems or blocked access. In many cases like these, speed could reduce the need for compensation.

Sometimes customers think that fixing the problem should involve compensation because there have been tangible and intangible costs to the customer which they expect to be at least reimbursed. Some customers do often expect compensation, but many appreciate that it is not necessary for every scenario and/or every circumstance in any one scenario, and/or would prefer an assessed amount rather than a flat rate.

Following these aspects, customers' top priorities centre around good communication. Customers made a lot of comments about understanding the circumstances before we awarded compensation. Could customers value the recognition and personal interaction involved in the process of negotiating a fair settlement as much as the settlement itself?

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

Apologies from us were rated as importantly by customers as the speed with which we resolve their issue when we get their most important aspect of our services wrong. Compensation was only mentioned slightly more frequently. However, customers' views vary on whether they expect compensation. Some expect it as a way of incentivising us to do better in future.

Many of the payments we make are required by Ofwat, and therefore must be made. However, other payments, including our EGSS and goodwill payments, could be re-visited with the challenge in mind of whether the payment represents excellent service and what else we need to put in place around it operationally to fully satisfy the customer.

3. Communication and speed.

Many customers accept that some resolutions may take time, but they **expect to be kept informed and updated and given the chance to discuss their resolution** with us until their issue is resolved. **Apologising is a bare minimum**, but above all customers want us to try to understand the issue's individual impact on them. Some would even appreciate feedback from us about how we are preventing the situation from happening again.

Some customers mentioned that **acknowledgments were important in the first instance**. When talking about our phone system, many were accepting of waiting on hold if they got good advice or a resolution in return. Those who were less willing to wait on hold want acknowledgment and an estimated wait time or call back facility.

Discretionary payments

4. Employees with experience of issuing payments reported that some customers respond with **confusion and question why the payment has been made** - particularly when the payment has been made for something that the customer had not complained about or felt to be a great inconvenience. Comments from compensation recipients in the survey appear to support this view. Particularly during the pandemic, people may have an increased need and appreciation for two-way, personal communication.

This suggests there is a need to re-visit the communications we make before, during and after issuing payments, to make sure we keep the customer fully informed, meet their emotional needs, and indeed that we don't issue payments when the customer is not receptive to one.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

While most customers agreed with the general payments we make, they were often **assuming that we would pay the full costs** met by the customer consequently, so that the payments mentioned would simply be a goodwill payment on top. Customers often wanted payments for certain things (particularly the most serious issues) to be negotiated with the customer, rather than set amounts or ranges.

Customer team managers may want to think about whether discretionary payments should be standardised, or whether any limits should be set.

5. **Some employees were not positive about the experience of giving payments**, expressing concerns that we used payments to ‘buy our way out of issues’, that they don’t feel comfortable giving payments and that they would prefer it if we did more to resolve the original issue.

Customers’ views seem to support this. Most customers said that the most important thing we should do when something goes wrong is fix the issue. Many saw the other actions as secondary to this.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

Customer priorities

6. In the scenario ranking exercise, the burst water main **water scenario** ranked as the ‘most serious’ fault¹⁰ by employees and customers was the scenario in which we wouldn’t make a default payment. In addition, the water scenario we had chosen to enhance (a cancelled appointment due to an emergency) was ranked the least serious fault by employees and customers.
7. For customer service issues, our payments and approaches seem to be more in tune with customers’ and employees’ rankings for seriousness. Employees seem to rank call waiting times as more serious than customers do, as any communication relating to billing was prioritised quite highly by customers, although some thought it may not be urgent due to the customer contacting us via letter.
8. For wastewater issues, customers ranked the **sewer flooding** scenario as most serious and their comments included that they would expect all their tangible and intangible costs to be covered, which **conflicts with our current compensation cap**. Further detail about customer expectations can be inferred from the more detailed questions asked of all customers about the burst water main scenario. Not keeping a customer informed about how soon we will attend their property when it’s flooded with rainwater was ranked second most serious, yet in this situation we do not make any payments.
9. Customer comments made it clear that **most customers would expect to be reimbursed for expenses incurred as a result of incorrect advice** from us about responsibility for a drain, so perhaps we should revisit the conditions under which we would reimburse these costs. Customers ranked incorrect advice as more serious than taking a long time to respond to an odour issue. Therefore the £50 payment for exceeding 10 days to reply about a smelly drain may be considered excessive by customers.

We should review whether the scenarios ranked least serious in all three directorates should receive payments, and the level of these payments. Likewise, we should review whether we are providing high enough standards and payments for the scenarios ranked most serious.

¹⁰ *During repair work to fix a burst main, a customer is left without water for 10 hours. The call to complain about the length of time they had no water.*

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

Payment amounts

10. If we **block access** to a customer's property because of planned work and do not advise the customer, we make an automatic payment of £20 which the customer is not advised about. Some employees and customers highlighted that blocked access could have a worse impact on people with mobility issues or people with young children, and that for these customers £20 would not be enough compensation. £50 was recommended by one employee, two others suggested that the payment amount should be flexible depending on the length of time we had blocked access for and any costs incurred by the customer as a result, e.g. not being able to get to work.

Three quarters of customers did not agree about making a payment for this but expected us to immediately restore access and/or apologise once we were made aware. Those who suggested a payment mostly suggested amounts between £50 and £100, while some said this should depend on the circumstances, e.g. whether a customer was vulnerable.

11. If we **flood the inside of a customer's property with water from a main**, we pay the customer's full annual water charge or £100, whichever is more (max £1,000).

Most employees felt that what we do should be tailored to the individual household's circumstances and the extent of damage caused and only a minority thought that the amount we pay is appropriate and proportionate.

Most customers agreed with us paying compensation for this. They agreed with employees that the payment should be assessed rather than have a flat fee or limit and thought the payment should cover all costs incurred by the customer as a result. While some accepted the idea of claiming on their household insurance, some did not, or they at least wanted their excess covered by us. Opinions about the sewer flooding scenario suggest that customers would expect a similar approach for this.

12. If a customer has experienced **unplanned interruptions totalling more than 18 hours which have not individually qualified for a GSS payment in a 12-month period**, we make an automatic payment of £20.

Some employees felt that the payment amount should be more flexible, depending on individual circumstances, and that the factors we should consider include the times of the interruptions, whether bottled water had to be purchased and whether the customer was unable to shower.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

More than half of customers agreed with us paying compensation or credits for this, and with the current payment for repeated interruptions. Only a fifth of customers wanted an assessed rather than fixed amount for this, and three times this proportion wanted compensation. Around half of those who suggested alternative amounts gave amounts of £50-100 due to the inconvenience it would cause them.

13. If we issue a **County Court Judgment or Credit Default issued against a customer in error**, we will immediately reverse the judgment and any fees entered on their account and make an automatic payment of £150.

Some employees felt that this may not be sufficient to cover the potential financial and emotional impacts on the customer. Alternative amounts between £250 - £1,000 were suggested by two employees.

More than half of customers agreed with us paying compensation or credits for this issue and felt that the amount we pay was reasonable and proportionate. However, many commented that it would depend on the situation and the financial consequences this could cause. For example, having a CCJ can affect job prospects and customers' ability to get a mortgage. However, if all traces of the CCJ were removed from all records, or a letter put on key accounts to ensure creditors were aware that it was issued in error, customers would be more accepting of this. Half of customer's alternative amounts were in the £50 to £500 range.

14. If a customer experiences **discoloured water**, we typically advise them to run their tap until the water clears and award approximately £6 on average (equivalent to the cost of 5,000 litres of water).

Nearly half of customers agreed with paying compensation or credits for this, and the amount. A small minority were concerned that the water may not be safe to drink, but others were aware that discolouration and safety are not necessarily linked. Around half of those who suggested alternative amounts gave an amount between £20 and £50 – the lowest for all the scenarios presented to customers. This suggests that the £6 payment does not feel significant enough to some.

15. Our current compensation for when a **metered customer receives estimated bills** for more than a year is an automatic payment of £20.

While three in five customers agreed with us paying compensation or credits for this and felt this compensation was reasonable and proportionate, many appeared to base this on the assumption that we would refund any over-payments, waive under-payments

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

or put a generous payment plan in place for the customer. This change would have a significant financial impact on the company compared to our current arrangements, so the evidence should be considered in more detail.

Digital contact methods

16. A small majority of employees and the majority of employees in the online survey were in favour of including digital contact methods in Our Promise to You.

Customers were asked about social media complaints in particular, rather than digital contact methods generally. Around half of customers were in favour of guaranteeing response times for customers who complain via social media and most of these supported us including Facebook and Twitter. However, many mentioned that they did not use these platforms and/or thought they were inappropriate for complaints.

There could be generational differences at play here, but because a large proportion of our customers are supportive, we should consider servicing complaints via social media with guaranteed response times.

17. Most employees agreed that if digital methods are to be included in our standards then we should guarantee response time in the same way that we do for telephone and written contact.

Customer comments also included that they wanted this parity. When they gave a time frame, most expected us to reply within three days, and nearly all within a week.

18. Employees were divided on the question of offering compensation for late response times to digital contact. Those who felt that we should suggested that compensation should be set at the same level as for written and telephone contact. Those who felt that we shouldn't suggested that this would be an unwelcome expense.

Less than a quarter of customers thought we should pay compensation if we fail to respond to social media contact within our guaranteed response time while nearly half said we should not. When pushed for an amount, the most popular was £20 but some customers again said the payment should depend on the seriousness of the impact.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

We could therefore consider only offering compensation for late responses on social media in Our Promise to You when the issue raised was very serious.

Other observations

There were no significant differences in customers' views noted between results for the NW and ESW regions. Therefore, the revised Our Promise to You policy need not be tailored to each region beyond not including wastewater issues in the ESW version.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

APPENDIX 1: ONE-TO-ONE EMPLOYEE INTERVIEW GUIDE AND SHOW MATERIAL

INTRODUCTION

- Thank you for taking the time to talk to me.
- Introduce self and role as a researcher
- Let's start by checking that you're happy with why we're here to today [*take any questions and share any background information required (grey box below) before moving to consent section*]

Our guaranteed standards are set out in [Our Promise to You](#), a customer-facing document which sets out what we will do to put things right when we get them wrong.

Our Promise to You is going to be reviewed this year. The Customer Compliance Team has asked us to talk to our employees and customers so that their views can inform any changes they make.

There are three main reasons Our Promise to You is going to be reviewed:

- 1. Our Promise to You, and the documents which inform it, have not been thoroughly reviewed for a number of years.*
- 2. In 2018, following consultation with all companies, Ofwat published a number of recommended changes to its GSS scheme.*
- 3. We know that digital contact methods are becoming increasingly popular and we need to think about how to reflect these in Our Promise to You.*

The first stage of the review is to talk to around 30 of our people, from all over the business, who are involved in managing or delivering 'Our Promise to You' – and hopefully you're going to be one of them!

This conversation is your chance to tell us what you think of our standards. By sharing your views you'll help us to make changes to improve our approach. There are no right or wrong answers – I just want to hear your honest opinions.

[Check participant is happy and move to consent]

INFORMED CONSENT

Collect Pre-Signed Consent Form OR ask for a form to be signed before beginning.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

SECTION 1: ABOUT YOU

Q1. To start please can you tell me about what you do and how your work relates to our standards of service?

SECTION 2: TOP OF MIND

Q2. I'd like you to tell me what comes to mind when you think about our promises to customers and standards of service

If participant is struggling give reassurance that there are no right or wrong answers - we're just trying to understand which parts of our standards are top of mind to different people in the business.

If prompts are required ask:

- What services do our standards cover?
- What sorts of things do we do to put things right when we get them wrong?

SECTION 3: THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE OF OUR STANDARDS

As someone who chats to our customers on a daily basis **or** is closely involved in delivering or managing services, I'd like to understand your perspective on what our customers know about our standards and how they respond to receiving payments.

<i>Participant <u>has</u> personal experience of issuing any type of penalty payment</i>	<i>Participant <u>does not have</u> personal experience of issuing GSS, EGSS and/or Goodwill payments</i>
<p>Q3. Do you think the average customer is aware of our standards and that that they will receive compensation for various failures?</p> <p>Q4. How common is it for a customer to request compensation when something goes wrong? <i>[Probe: what things are they most likely to request compensation for?]</i></p>	<p>Q5. <u>OPEN QUESTION</u>: I'd like to hear any views you have about customers' experiences of receiving payments when we have failed to meet our standards.</p> <p><i>[Based on response ask appropriate follow up questions or draw upon questions in the left column]</i></p>

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

Q5. When you issue payments how do customers respond? *[Probes: Do they understand why they are getting a payment? How do you think it makes them feel? Do they comment on the amount? Any differences between GSS/EGSS/Goodwill]*

SECTION 4: WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Q6. I'm going to give you a four short scenarios to read [**present appropriate Scenario Cards – customer, water or wastewater**], I'd like you to put them in order for me, from the most serious 'biggest' fault (*i.e. the customer experience which you think is the most below expectation or would result in the highest loss, damage or inconvenience to the customer*) to the least serious. Please tell me your thinking as you go.

Q7. Now I'd like you to tell me what, if anything, you think we should do to put things right in each scenario.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

CUSTOMER SCENARIO CARDS – SHOWN TO ANY PARTICIPANT NOT FROM THE WATER OR WASTEWATER DIRECTORATE



Eight days ago a customer sent us a letter asking if they could change the way they pay.

We can't agree to the change and haven't told the customer yet.



A customer telephones us about their charges. We need to call them back and take three weeks to do so.



A customer has contacted us five times over the past six months about their account.

We responded on time to each contact but the customer felt that the advice we gave wasn't clear, which is why they keep calling us back.



A customer has been on hold waiting to speak to an advisor for 12 minutes.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

WATER SCENARIO CARDS – SHOWN TO ANY PARTICIPANT FROM THE WATER DIRECTORATE



We've carried out emergency repair work to fix a burst water main.

A customer calls to complain that they were without water for 10 hours.



Tomorrow we will interrupt a customer's water supply for five hours to do some routine maintenance.

We haven't written to the customer to let them know.



We have an appointment to visit a customer's home, following contact they made about the taste of their tap water.

We call the customer on the day of the appointment to cancel because emergency works needs to take priority.



Following several calls we advise a customer that a loss of supply is their issue, not ours.

On our direction the customer pays for a plumber, who discovers that the issue is on our side of the network.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

WASTEWATER SCENARIO CARDS – SHOWN TO ANY PARTICIPANT FROM THE WASTEWATER DIRECTORATE



We've advised a customer that a drainage issue is on their side of the network.

On our direction the customer pays for a drainage contractor, who discovers that the issue is on our side of the network.



It has been raining heavily. Lots of customers are calling to tell us they've been flooded. Our advisors are arranging visits for everyone who calls.

One customer complains about the length of time it is going to take for us to attend their property.



We received a call from a customer about a smell coming from a drain at the front of their house.

Fifteen days later we call them back to arrange a visit.



The inside of a customer's home has been flooded with sewage from one of our assets.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

SECTION 5: EGSS AND OUR COMPANY CUSTOMER CHARTER

I'd like you to look at these pages (**Ofwat's Standards and Enhancements Decision Board**)

- The first page covers Ofwat's standards and the amounts we enhance some of them by. I'm sharing this page with you for context and information – we have no plans to make any changes to these
- The second page shows the payments we make under our Company Customer Charter

Q8. I'd like you to look at the second page, and what we currently do to put things right.

- Have we got it right?
- Do you want to make changes? If you do please explain your reasons to me
- Is there anything else we should add to our Company Customer Charter (things you think we get wrong which customers should be compensated for but currently aren't)

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

These are Ofwat's Guaranteed Standards of Service, some of which we enhance★

These are for information only, we do not plan to make changes to these standards.

Making and Keeping Appointments	Ofwat The minimum we must pay	NWG living water The amount we pay
A customer has made an appointment with us. We haven't given some, or all, of this information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If we will visit during the morning or the afternoon The times we consider to be the morning or afternoon A two-hour time slot (if requested) 	£20	£30★
A customer had an appointment arranged and we did not: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit on the appointed day Visit during the morning or afternoon as agreed Visit within the appointed two-hour time slot (if requested) 	£20	£30★
A customer has had their appointment cancelled by us with less than 24 hours notice.	£20	£30★

Account Queries and Complaints	Ofwat The minimum we must pay	NWG living water The amount we pay
A customer wrote to us to query their bill. Ten working days have passed and they haven't received a substantive response from us.	£20	£20
A customer wrote to us to request a change to their payment arrangements. We're unable to agree to the change. Five working days have passed and they haven't received a substantive response from us.	£20	£20
A customer wrote to us to complain about their supply of water or their sewerage services. Ten working days have passed and they haven't received a substantive response from us.	£20	£50★

Water Supply	Ofwat The minimum we must pay	NWG living water The amount we pay
In 48 hours, or less, we plan to interrupt a customer's supply for at least four hours. We wrote to the customer several days ago to tell them and to state the times their water will be turned off and back on again. Their supply is not turned back on by the time we state in the notice.	£30	£30
A customer's supply has been unexpectedly interrupted because of an emergency event. 12 hours or more have passed and their supply has not been restored.	£30	£30
A customer has experienced low pressure* twice, for more than one hour each time, within 28 days. This was not caused by necessary work on the network.	£25	£25

*Below seven metres static head (0.7 bar)

Wastewater	Ofwat The minimum we must pay	NWG living water The amount we pay
The inside of a customer's building has been flooded with sewage from one of our assets.	Payment equal to annual sewerage charges (Min: £150 Max: £1000)	Payment equal to annual sewerage charges (Min: £150 Max: £1000)
A customer's land, property or outbuilding has been flooded with sewage from one of our assets.	Payment equal to 50% of annual sewerage charges (Min: £75 Max: £500)	Payment equal to 50% of annual sewerage charges (Min: £75 Max: £500)

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS



These are payments we make and actions we take under our Company Customer Charter.

Water meters	What we currently do to put things right	Is this appropriate and proportionate? Do you want to make any changes?
A metered customer hasn't had a bill based on an actual meter read for over a year and there are no access issues. <i>(i.e. we could have read the meter without needing access to the customer's property)</i>		
A customer has asked to have a meter fitted. It is more than 90 days later - the meter hasn't been installed and the delay is our fault.	The customer will pay as if they were metered from the 91st day (i.e. they won't pay on their previous rate for longer than they should).	

Water quality	What we currently do to put things right	Is this appropriate and proportionate? Do you want to make any changes?
A customer on a metered supply calls us to report that their water is discoloured. We ask them to run their tap until the water is clear.	The customer's account is credited with an amount equivalent to five cubic metres. <i>(Equivalent to running a tap for one hour).</i>	
A customer's washing machine was on during a discolouration event. They contact us to tell us their laundry is stained.	We visit the customer and give them special detergent. If it does not work the customer can make a claim to replace their damaged items.	

Blocked access	What we currently do to put things right	Is this appropriate and proportionate? Do you want to make any changes?
A customer's access to their property is restricted because of planned work which they were not advised about.		

Leakage allowances for metered customers	What we currently do to put things right	Is this appropriate and proportionate? Do you want to make any changes?
We issued a Waste Water Notice for a leak outside a customer's property and gave the customer a time-scale to repair it. The customer repaired the leak in time and has asked for help with their increased charges.	Provided the leak isn't caused by the customer's negligence, we will fully cover the cost of the last water.	

Interruptions to water supply	What we currently do to put things right	Is this appropriate and proportionate? Do you want to make any changes?
In a 12 month period a customer has experienced unplanned interruptions totalling more than 18 hours which have not individually qualified for a GSS payment.		

Water flooding	What we currently do to put things right	Is this appropriate and proportionate? Do you want to make any changes?
A customer's living area has been flooded with water from a main.	We pay the customer's full annual water charge or £100, whichever is more (Max £1,000)	

Customer accounts	What we currently do to put things right	Is this appropriate and proportionate? Do you want to make any changes?
A customer has had a County Court Judgment or Credit Default issued against them, by us, in error. We immediately reversed the judgment and any fees entered on their account.		
StepChange have asked us to hold recovery action against a customer they're working with. We then issue a County Court Claim in error. We immediately cancel the claim before judgment is entered and remove any fees.		

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

SECTION 6: DISCRETIONARY PAYMENTS

Q9. Do you have any experience of requesting, approving or issuing discretionary (goodwill/optional) payments to customers? *(these are payments which we choose to make when we've inconvenienced the customer or caused them loss or damage – the exact scenarios and amounts aren't specified in our standards)*

[If 'no' ask if the participant has any opinions on these types of payments that they'd like to share then jump to next section]

- a. What sort of things do you try before deciding to give a payment? (probe: Is a payment the first or last resort?)
- b. What sort of things make you decide to request/give a payment? (probe: customer's attitude or characteristics, satisfaction scores (5/5, Rant & Rave, C-Mex)
- c. How do you decide how much to give?
- d. Do you feel that our systems, processes and people help and support you to make the right decisions around discretionary payments *[i.e. Are there ever things that you want to do but can't because either systems, processes or people won't allow it?]*
- e. How does it make you feel to issue payments? [Probe: do you feel that you're providing excellent service?]

SECTION 7: DIGITAL CONTACT METHODS

OPTY focuses on telephone and written contact. As part of this review we're looking into the inclusion of digital contact methods (e.g. social media, web-chat, text message) in our standards.

- Q10. Do you think digital contact methods should be included as part of our standards?
- Q11. Do you think customers would expect us to guarantee response times to digital contact methods?
- Q12. Do you think we should compensate customers if we fail to meet the response times we set for digital methods?

SECTION 8: THE NEXT PHASE OF RESEARCH - CUSTOMERS

The next phase of this project is to engage customers through focus groups. Thinking about everything we have just discussed and your experiences of our standards...

- Q13. What do you think are the most important things to consult with our customers on?
- Q14. Finally, before we finish is there anything else you'd like to say or add to any of the comments you've made?

THANKS AND CLOSE

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

APPENDIX 2: EMPLOYEE ONLINE SURVEY

Please note this is a copied and pasted version of the online survey, if you would prefer to view it in the format employees saw it in, including the survey routing please [click here](#).

1. About You

Please tell us which Directorate of the business you work for

- Assets & Assurance
- Commercial
- Corporate Communications Customer
- Finance
- Human Resources
- Information Services
- Wastewater
- Water
- I don't know, I'm unsure or I'd prefer not to say

Which of the following best describes your day-to-day role at NWG

- My role is customer-facing and I engage with customers every day
- I sometimes engage with customers as part of my role, but not every day My role isn't customer-facing and I don't tend to engage with customers I don't know,
- I'm unsure or I'd prefer not to say
- Other (please describe) _____

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

2. Our Customers' Understanding of Our Standards

Please rate your agreement with the following statements:

Customers are aware of our standards and that that they will receive compensation for various failures

- Strongly Disagree
- 2
- 3
- 4
- Strongly Agree

Customers are likely to request compensation when something goes wrong

- Strongly Disagree
- 2
- 3
- 4
- Strongly Agree

Which do you think is most important to a customer when we get something wrong

- Receiving compensation
- Receiving an apology
- Somethingelse _____

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

3. The scenarios below all describe customer experiences which are below standard.

[COMPLETED ONLY BY EMPLOYEES FROM DIRECTORATES OTHER THAN WATER OR WASTEWATER]

Please rank the scenarios from the one you think is the very worst, to the one you think is the least worst.

	1 – The very worst	2	3	4 – The least worst
Eight days ago a customer sent us a letter asking if they could change the way they pay. We haven't responded yet.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A customer telephones us about their charges. We need to call them back and take three weeks to do so.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A customer has contacted us five times over the past six months about their account. They kept calling back because they felt that the advice we gave wasn't clear.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A customer has been on hold waiting to speak to an advisor for 12 minutes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please use this space if you would like to explain your rankings

OUR PROMISE TO YOU REVIEW

PHASE 2: CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND SYNTHESIS WITH EMPLOYEE FINDINGS

[COMPLETED ONLY BY EMPLOYEES FROM THE WATER DIRECTORATE]

Please rank the scenarios from the one you think is the very worst, to the one you think is the least worst.

	1 – The very worst	2	3	4 – The least worst
Tomorrow we will interrupt a customer's water supply for five hours to do some routine maintenance. We haven't written to the customer to let them know.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We have an appointment to visit a customer's home. We call the customer on the day of the appointment to cancel because emergency works needs to take priority.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Following several calls we advise a customer that a loss of supply is their issue, not ours. On our direction the customer pays for a plumber, who discovers that the issue is on our side of the network.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We've carried out emergency repair work to fix a burst water main. A customer calls to complain that they were without water for 10 hours.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please use this space if you would like to explain your rankings

[COMPLETED ONLY BY EMPLOYEES FROM THE WASTEWATER DIRECTORATE]

Please rank the scenarios from the one you think is the very worst, to the one you think is the least worst.

	1 – The very worst	2	3	4 – The least worst
The inside of a customer’s home has been flooded with sewage from one of our assets.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We received a call from a customer about a smell coming from a drain at the front of their house. Fifteen days later we call them back to arrange a visit.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We’ve advised a customer that a drainage issue is on their side of the network. On our direction the customer pays for a drainage contractor, who discovers that the issue is on our side of the network.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It has been raining heavily. Lots of customers are calling to tell us they’ve been flooded. One customer complains about the length of time it is going to take for us to attend their property.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please use this space if you would like to explain your rankings

4. Ofwat's Standards of Service

When we fail to meet certain standards of service we are required, by Ofwat, to make a payment to the customer affected. We know that all of the service failures listed below represent poor service, but we'd like to understand which you think is the very worst, to which you think is the least worst.

	1 – The very worst	2	3	4 – The least worst
Failing to specify an appointment time, arriving late or cancelling an appointment with less than 24 hours' notice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Failing to respond to a contact or complaint within 5-10 working days.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Failing to turn a customer's water back on, within the time we said, following a planned interruption or an emergency interruption lasting more than 12 hour.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flooding the inside or outside of a customer's home with sewage.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please use this space if you would like to explain your rankings

Our Company Customer Charter

When we fail to meet certain standards of service we make payments, or take action to put things right.

Our Company Customer Charter covers everything listed below. We know that all of these represent poor service, but we'd like to understand which you think is the very worst, to which you think is the least worst.

	1 – The very worst	2	3	4 – The least worst
Failing to read a meter for over a year or to install a meter within three months of it being requested.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asking a customer to run their tap for an hour to clear discoloured water or causing stained washing as a result of a discolouration event.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Restricting a customer's access to their property, without telling them, during planned works.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flooding a customer's home with water from a main.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issuing a County Court Judgment against a customer in error	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please use this space if you would like to explain your rankings

Digital Contact

Our Promise to You focuses on our response times to telephone and written contact. We're onsidering whether or not digital contact methods, such as social and text messages, should also be included

Do you think digital contact methods should be included as part of our standards?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure, don't know or prefer not to say

Do you think we should guarantee response times to digital contact methods in the same way that we do for telephone and written contact?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure, don't know or prefer not to say

If you think that we should guarantee response times to digital contact how long do you think we should have to respond?

Thank you for taking part!
Your views will help us to review Our Promise to You and to continue to deliver an unrivalled customer experience!

APPENDIX 3: NW CUSTOMER ONLINE SURVEY

Please note that the wastewater scenarios were not explored with ESW customers.

1. True or False

Please read the statement below. Do you think it is true or false?

Northumbrian Water will pay compensation to a customer when something goes wrong

- True
- False
- Don't know, unsure or prefer not to say

2. Seeking information and contacting us

If you wanted to find out how to ask Northumbrian Water for compensation what would you do first?

- Look on the Northumbrian Water website
- Call Northumbrian Water
- Look at my most recent bill
- Search Northumbrian Water's social media
- Ask someone I know (e.g. friend or family member)
- Don't know, unsure or prefer not to say
- Something else (please describe) _____

If you wanted to contact us to make a complaint how would you be most likely to do it?

- By telephone
- Writing us a letter
- By email
- By text message
- Messaging us on social media
- Using the chat option on our website
- Don't know, unsure or prefer not to say
- Something else (please describe) _____

3. When something goes wrong with our customer service

We always aim to give our customers the **very best customer service**, but we don't always get it right. Please read the scenarios below and rank them from the issue you think would be the most to least serious to experience.

	Most serious (1)	2	3	Least serious (4)
You've telephoned us about your bill. We promise to call you back and take three weeks to do so.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You need some advice. You've rang us five times in the past six months and each time you've felt that the advice we gave wasn't clear.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You've telephoned us and have been on hold waiting to speak to someone for 12 minutes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eight days ago you sent us a letter asking to change the way you pay and haven't heard back from us yet.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you would you like to, please explain your rankings here.

4. When something goes wrong with your water services

We always aim to give our customers the very best water service, but we don't always get it right. Please read the scenarios below and rank them from the issue you think would be the most to least serious to experience.

	Most serious (1)	2	3	Least serious (4)
A water main near your home has burst. We're fixing it but so far you've been without water for 10 hours.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tomorrow we will turn your water off for five hours to do some routine maintenance. You haven't been told in writing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
On our advice you've paid a plumber to fix a problem with your water supply. When they investigate they find that the problem is actually our responsibility to fix.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You have an appointment booked today for us to check an issue with the taste of your tap water. We call you to cancel because emergency works needs to take priority.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you would you like to, please explain your rankings here.

5. When something goes wrong with your wastewater services

We always aim to give our customers the very best wastewater service, but we don't always get it right. Please read the scenarios below and rank them from the issue you think would be the most to least serious to experience.

	Most serious (1)	2	3	Least serious (4)
You've called us to report a smelly drain at the front of your house. Fifteen days later we call you back to arrange a visit. It has been raining heavily and your home has been flooded.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You've reported it to us but feel the need to call back about the length of time it is taking us to attend your home.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
On our advice you've paid a drainage specialist to fix a problem with your drains. When they investigate they find that the problem is actually our responsibility to fix.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The inside of your home has been flooded with sewage.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you would you like to, please explain your rankings here.

6. Putting things right when they go wrong

Please tell us the most important thing we could do to **put things right** for a customer who has experienced each of the issues below

	Pay compensation into their bank account	Credit their water account	Apologise	Fix the problem	Something else (please comment)
A customer on a water meter has received bills that aren't based on actual meter reads for over a year	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A customer on a water meter had brown, orange or black water coming out of their taps. We asked them to leave the tap running for 30 minutes to clear it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We've blocked access to a customer's home to carry out work without letting them know in writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A customer has had their water supply interrupted for a total of 18 hours over the course of a year	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
One of our water mains has burst and flooded the inside of a customer's home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A county court judgment has been issued against a customer in error	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please share any comments about what you'd prefer us to do to put things right here

7. Receiving compensation

Have you ever received compensation from Northumbrian Water?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know, unsure or prefer not to say

8. Receiving compensation

Please tell us what went wrong

How much compensation did you receive from us?

Don't worry if you can't remember the exact amount - just tell us what you can

Did you request compensation or receive an automatic payment?

- I specifically requested compensation
- I made a complaint and was then offered compensation
- I didn't request compensation - Northumbrian Water made an automatic payment
- Don't know, unsure or prefer not to say

How did receiving compensation make you feel?

Was the amount you received reasonable and proportionate given the issue you'd experienced?

- Very reasonable and proportionate
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- Unreasonable and unproportionate

Would you like to explain your answer:

Was receiving compensation a satisfactory end to the issue you experienced?

- A very satisfactory end to the issue experienced
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- A very unsatisfactory end to the issue experienced

Would you like to explain your answer:

9. Imagine you're in charge of our compensation payments

How much compensation do you think it would be reasonable and proportionate to pay a customer if they experienced any of the following service issues?

A customer on a water meter has received bills that aren't based on actual meter reads for over a year

- The payment you currently make of **£20** feels reasonable and proportionate to me
- I think the compensation should be: _____

A customer on a water meter has brown, orange or black water coming out of their taps

- The payment you currently make of **£6** on average (equivalent to the cost of 5,000 litres of water) feels reasonable and proportionate to me
- I think the compensation should be: _____

We've blocked access to a customer's home to carry out work without letting them know in writing

- The payment you currently make of **£20** feels reasonable and proportionate to me
- I think the compensation should be: _____

A customer has had their water supply interrupted for a total of 18 hours over the course of a year

- The payment you currently make of **£20** feels reasonable and proportionate to me
- I think the compensation should be: _____

One of our water mains has burst and flooded the inside of a customer's home

- The payment you currently make of **£100-£1,000** (upto the cost of the customer's annual water charge) feels reasonable and proportionate to me
- I think the compensation should be: _____

We have issued a county court judgment against a customer in error

- The payment you currently make of **£150** feels reasonable and proportionate to me
- I think the compensation should be: _____

10. Receiving compensation

If we got something wrong with your services what would you most like us to do to put things right?

- Pay compensation into your bank account
- Credit your water account
- Apologise
- Fix the problem
- Don't know, unsure or prefer not to say
- Something else (please describe) _____

If we were going to pay you compensation how would you prefer to receive your payment?

- Directly into my bank account
- A credit to my water account
- Don't know, unsure or prefer not to say
- Another way (please describe) _____

If we were going to pay you compensation how would you want us to let you know ?

- Call you
- Write you a letter
- Send you an email
- Send you a text message
- Send you a message on Facebook or Twitter
- You don't need to let me know
- Don't know, unsure or prefer not to say
- Another way (please describe) _____

11. Social Media

We have set times that we guarantee to respond to telephone and written complaints within. Do you think we should also guarantee response times for customers who complain by social media?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know, unsure or prefer not to say

Which social media platforms do you think we should guarantee reponse times for? (please tick as many as you think)

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Don't know, unsure or prefer not to say
- Other (please say which) _____

If you think we should guarantee response times for customers who contact us on social media what length of time would be reasonable?

Please bear in mind we only monitor social media from 7am to 8pm.

- Within an hour
- Between one to five hours
- By the end of the day that you contacted us
- Between one to three days
- Within a week
- Longer than a week
- Don't know, unsure or prefer not to say
- Other (please comment) _____

If we fail to respond to customers who contact us by social media, within the response time we guarantee, should we pay them compensation?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know, unsure or prefer not to say

If you selected 'Yes' to the previous question please suggest how much compensation would be reasonable

12. Please complete these two sentences...

When it comes to the services that I receive from Northumbrian Water the one thing that is most important to me is...

If Northumbrian Water got the thing that's most important to me wrong, this is what I'd expect them to do to put it right...

13. Prize Draw

To enter the prize draw to win an Apple iPad please fill in the boxes below and consent to our terms and conditions. We will only use this information to administer the prize draw and it will be stored separately from your survey responses to ensure your anonymity.

My name is:

I confirm that I am aged 18 years old or over

Please provide a phone number or email address. We will only use this information to contact you if you are the prize draw winner.

Prize Draw Terms and conditions: This prize draw is being held by Northumbrian Water Limited (NWL), whose registered office address is Northumbria House, Abbey Road, Pity Me, Durham, DH1 5FJ. The prize, an 'Apple Watch (Series 5)' is non-transferable. The winner is not able to specify a colour for the product.

Entry into the prize draw opens on 21 December 2020 and closes at midnight on 8 January 2021. There will be one overall winner from Northumbrian Water/Essex & Suffolk Water selected by the survey and competition organiser at random from the contact information provided. The winner will be notified using the contact details they have provided for this purpose. If, for whatever reason and having used all reasonable efforts to do so, Northumbrian Water Limited is unable to contact or locate the winner, another winner will be selected by Northumbrian Water Limited at random. This process will continue until a winner has been successfully contacted. Only one entry allowed per household. Entrants must be over the age of 18 years old. This competition is not open to employees of Northumbrian Water Limited.

In entering the competition, you confirm that you are eligible to do so and eligible to claim the prize. The survey and competition organiser may require you to provide proof that you are eligible to enter the competition. The decision of the survey and competition organiser is final and no correspondence or discussion will be entered into. Winners details will not be published anywhere but, provided that the competition winner provides its consent to us to do so, will be available to members of the public for one month after the closing date of the competition by request to haveyoursay@nwl.co.uk. The prize will be sent by Special Delivery by 15 January 2021.

I consent to NWL using my name and contact information to administer the prize draw. I understand that I can withdraw this consent at any time by emailing haveyoursay@nwl.co.uk

14. Join our online community for the chance to win more prizes!

If you'd like to share your views on other water related issues, why not join our online community for customers?

Leave your email address in the box below and we will email you an invitation, if you don't want to join our online community click the blue arrow to continue.

Please email me an invitation to join Northumbrian Water's online community

Thank you for taking part!