

**CYNGOR DEFNYDDWYR CONSUMER COUNCIL FOR**



**The Consumer Council for Water's  
response to  
Consumer Council for Northern Ireland's  
Draft Forward Work Programme 2018/19**

**February 2018**

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Consumer Council for Water (CCWater) is the statutory consumer organisation representing water and sewerage consumers in England and Wales. CCWater has four regional committees in England and a committee for Wales.
- 1.2 We welcome the opportunity to comment on the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland's (CCNI) Draft Forward Work Programme for 2018/19. This document sets out CCWater's response, which focuses on the water and sewerage aspect of your consultation.
- 1.4 Overall we are supportive of your draft Work Programme, and we have commented on some issues where our working together could increase the insights necessary to make changes to benefit consumers.

## 2 Helping consumers by working together

- 2.1 We value the links between CCWater and CCNI and the regular sharing of experiences that helps develop policies to benefit water and sewerage consumers.

### **Consumer participation in price controls**

- 2.2 One area that would be useful for your Programme is to give more visibility to consumer engagement and participation during price controls. As you are a strongly evidence-based organisation, using that evidence, including evidence of consumers' priorities for the water and sewerage service, would be a positive way to give consumers a voice in the price control process. A development we are encouraging in England and Wales is for water companies to actively engage consumers to participate in the decision-making process. This means not only having statistically robust research about consumer priorities, but also getting consumers involved in how the money should be spent to deliver on those priorities.
- 2.3 More generally, the pressure from us for customers to be at the heart of the England and Wales water industry has, over the last ten years, caused a shift in culture towards a more customer-focused agenda. The sector now takes more effort to understand what consumers want their water and sewerage company to deliver.

### **Complaints**

- 2.3 We also assess how water companies are handling complaints. We then work with companies in order to address our recommendations. This could be an area for us to discuss further at our next regular joint meeting in order to share learning.

### **Vulnerability**

- 2.4 We support your plans on vulnerability. We have worked across sectors to encourage joint branding of services to consumers in vulnerable circumstances as 'priority services', a term which is already established in the energy sector. This

has gone well, and water companies have signed up to the change. We are happy to share more on this initiative and others at our next regular meeting.

### **Business Customers**

- 2.5 We support your initiative to provide free water bill health checks to businesses, and would like to understand more fully how it works.

Please direct any queries to:

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