

A large, stylized teal wave graphic that spans across the middle of the page. It consists of several rounded, overlapping shapes that create a sense of movement and depth, set against a dark purple background.

CCW

The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Consumer panels

Terms of Reference for Accountability Sessions

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1. Introduction

This document outlines the structure, roles and processes for the Water Voice consumer panels' Accountability Sessions.

Throughout this document, 'consumer panellists' or 'panellists' are used interchangeably, and refer to consumers who are recruited to be part of CCW-run consumer panels, and excludes any entities or individuals from CCW, the research agency, subject matter experts and water companies. 'Consumers' refers to consumers of the water sector generally, including those consumers that are not currently part of the consumer panels.

2. Overview of the Accountability Sessions

The Accountability Sessions are a mechanism for consumers to hold water companies to account on their performance and services. They allow consumer views to be heard and to be considered as part of company decision-making, as stated in the Water (Special Measures) Act 2025.

Progress against companies' key performance commitments will be shared with the panels, and the Accountability Sessions provide an opportunity for the panellists to question companies on actions taken to address consumer issues. They enable consumers to be involved in company decisions that have a material impact on consumer interests, as stated in the Water Industry Act 1991, Section 35B.

The aim of the Accountability Sessions is to facilitate a two-way discussion where consumer panellists are empowered to raise concerns, ask questions and challenge water companies on areas of perceived poor performance and issues of interest. Panellists will be supported by insights obtained from the consumer panels' research and significant events that are relevant to their service provider.

Consumer panellists will set the direction of the discussion at the Accountability Sessions following a prioritisation exercise led and facilitated by CCW and Taylor McKenzie Research (TMCK), the appointed research agency.

There will be two Accountability Sessions each year:

- The autumn sessions will focus on company service performance.
- The spring sessions will consider how far companies have met their action plans coming out of the autumn session. Within this, panellists will also be able to raise additional areas of concern with their company.

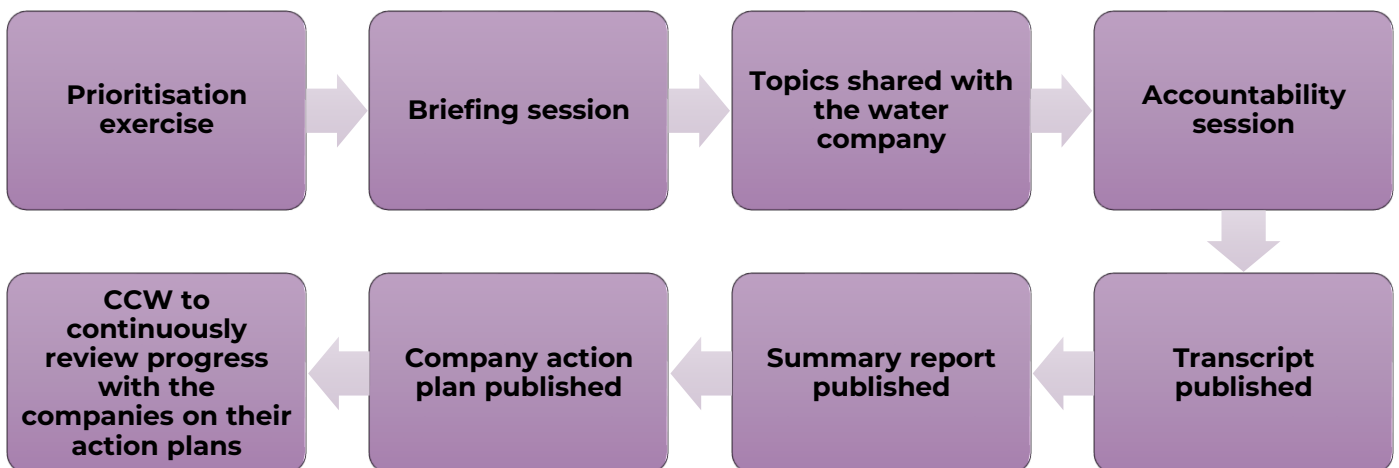
In addition, should panellists wish to raise issues with companies at other times during the year, ad-hoc Accountability Sessions may be held, for example following a significant service failure.

2.1 Scope

The Accountability Sessions for each panel will:

1. Be held at least twice a year with additional sessions held if required.
2. Be facilitated by Taylor McKenzie Research.
3. Focus on reviewing company service performance in the areas that matter most to panellists.
4. Focus on issues that have a material impact on the consumer experience, such as bill levels, water resources, environment, affordability and customer service, etc.).
5. Include agreed actions with a timescale jointly determined by the panel and water company.
6. Be reportable, with transcripts, summary reports and action plans published online.
7. Be chaired by a member of the CCW Board.

2.2 Accountability Session process



Please note that the first Accountability Sessions planned for spring 2026 will have a different agenda to support the launch of the sessions.

The planning and running of each session will be led by the panellists' availability but will involve co-ordination of the availability and contribution of several other key parties, including:

- CCW
- The water company
- Taylor McKenzie Research

3. Statutory obligations

As published in [the Decision on Ofwat's consumer involvement rule, November 2025](#)
When a CCW-convened consumer panel requests the undertaker's attendance at a meeting of the panel, the undertaker must make all reasonable efforts to ensure that at least one senior representative of the undertaker attend the meeting. Following attendance at a meeting of a CCW-convened consumer panel, the undertaker must provide a summary of matters discussed at the panel meeting to the undertaker's Board..

4. Research agency

Taylor McKenzie Research has been appointed by CCW as the independent research partner to design, deliver and facilitate the Water Voice consumer panels and associated Accountability Sessions.

As the appointed research agency, Taylor McKenzie is responsible for ensuring that the sessions are robust, inclusive and evidence-led. The sessions will provide a transparent, well-structured forum through which customers can hold water companies to account for their performance and commitments.

The agency plays a central role in bringing together insight from panel activities, supporting panellists in preparing for meaningful participation and ensuring that the outcomes of each Accountability Session are clear, measurable and reported in line with CCW's objectives and the Ofwat Consumer Involvement Rule.

4.1. Background

Taylor McKenzie is a specialist research agency with extensive experience in consumer engagement, qualitative facilitation and consumer accountability frameworks. The agency is responsible for managing all aspects of the Water Voice consumer panels including recruitment, onboarding, research design, data collection, community management and delivery of the Accountability Sessions.

Our approach ensures that each Accountability Session will:

- Be grounded in consumer evidence collected through monthly panel surveys ("Barometer" and "Spotlight" surveys) and community discussions.
- Reflect local priorities, drawing on issues raised by customers in each water company's region.
- Build participant confidence and knowledge through structured briefing sessions and preparatory materials.
- Result in clear, actionable outcomes that are recorded, monitored and reported publicly to strengthen accountability.

Taylor McKenzie operates under the Market Research Society (MRS) Code of Conduct and UK GDPR, ensuring all participant data is treated with confidentiality, fairness and respect.

4.2. Roles and responsibilities

The research agency's key roles and responsibilities are to:

1. Facilitate the accountability process

- Plan and deliver the pre-session briefing workshops to help panellists understand key company performance data, action plans and relevant consumer insights.
- Facilitate the Accountability Sessions themselves, ensuring open, respectful and balanced discussion between company representatives and panellists.
- Support CCW's Board Chair in managing the session structure, timekeeping and moderation of panellist questions.

2. Provide analytical and research support

- Gather, analyse and integrate data from the panel surveys and discussions to inform the session agenda.
- Support CCW in identifying emerging consumer themes and tracking company performance trends over time.
- Produce post-session summaries and input into the preparation of action plans and evaluation metrics.

3. Ensure inclusivity and participant support

- Manage communications with panel members, ensuring accessibility for participants with different needs, digital skills and levels of confidence.
- Ensure diverse representation in line with demographic targets for each water company region.
- Maintain a safe, respectful environment for all participants, ensuring adherence to the MRS Code of Conduct.

4. Reporting and evaluation

- Deliver accurate transcripts and high-quality summary reports following each session in line with CCW's publication deadlines (5 and 10-day requirements).
- Evaluate session effectiveness by capturing panellist feedback and lessons learned for continuous improvement.

Through these responsibilities, Taylor McKenzie Research will ensure that the Accountability Sessions serve as a credible, trusted and impactful platform for the customer voice and company accountability across England and Wales.

5. Panel members

Water Voice panel members represent people in their local area, from all walks of life, sharing their experiences, views and ideas about water and wastewater services and the company that provides them. Panel members will do this by taking part in regular online activities and occasional group discussions. Their insights will directly inform how water companies can improve, helping drive real change, transparent accountability and concrete actions that lead to better services, fairer outcomes and greater environmental responsibility.

5.1. Roles and responsibilities

1. Panel members will take part in a mix of online surveys, discussions and Accountability Sessions throughout the year. They will be supported by members of Taylor McKenzie Research every step of the way, with clear instructions, reminders and incentives for their time
2. Panel members will complete a simple virtual onboarding and registration process to confirm their place, including downloading the Water Voice panel app and signing up to the Water Voice online community.
3. At the start of each month, Taylor McKenzie will send panellists a 'Spotlight' survey – a short set of questions on a current theme or issue that matters to customers, such as water quality, customer service or protecting the environment.

Midway through the month, panel members will also be asked to complete a short 'Barometer' survey – a quick check on how they feel their water company is performing and how satisfied they are with the service they receive.

The 'Spotlight' survey helps explore new ideas and emerging issues as they happen, while the 'Barometer' survey helps track changes over time and allows panellists to share what is working well and where improvements are needed. Together, the results will help identify and prioritise the key issues to be raised with water companies.

4. As part of the onboarding process, panel members will be asked to join an interactive, Facebook-like, online space where they can engage with other panellists and take part in discussions focused on their local water company. Each week, panel members will be able to access and contribute to around 3–4 new posts, including news stories, water-saving tips, short quizzes and polls. This online community provides a platform for members to share their experiences, raise concerns and join conversations about how their water company is performing. It is designed for open, respectful conversation, where the insights consumers provide help hold water companies accountable and ensure they deliver on their promises to customers across England and Wales.
5. Over the course of the 12-month panel, there will be at least two Accountability Sessions. Taylor McKenzie Research will ensure that as many panel members as possible are invited to take part in at least one. If some members are not selected for that session, they will still be able to watch it live and share their thoughts and feedback through the online community – their voices will continue to be an important part of the process. Panellists who are especially interested in joining

one of these sessions will be encouraged to express their interest to the Panel Support Team during onboarding.

6. Before each Accountability Session, panel members will take part in a two-hour online briefing session designed to help them feel informed and confident. These briefing sessions will help them learn more about their water company's performance, decide which topics and questions matter most and understand exactly how the upcoming Accountability Sessions will work.
7. Being a panel member is an important commitment. Panellists will help shape how water companies listen and act on customer views over a 12-month period. Consumers recruited as panel members will be expected to stay engaged and participate regularly throughout the year.

5.2. Overview of panellists' tasks



6. Attendees

The members of the Accountability Sessions will include:

- Consumer panellists
- CCW Board member (Chair)
- Taylor Mckenzie Research
- Key water company representatives, such as the CEO and Senior Executives (membership may vary from meeting to meeting to ensure that people with the relevant knowledge are in attendance to be able to answer panellists' questions).

Other relevant stakeholders, e.g. regulators for the water industry in England and Wales and Chairs of the Independent Challenge Groups (ICGs), will be invited to observe the meeting. They can nominate a delegate to attend in their absence if they wish.

7. Briefing sessions

7.1. Overview

Prior to the Accountability Sessions, consumer panellists will undertake a series of activities to help prepare them. This includes identifying the key issues and agenda topics for the session and familiarising themselves with the latest information, including company performance data, the most recent company action plans and results from the monthly Barometer¹ and Spotlight surveys.²

Panellists will first complete a prioritisation exercise and read any pre-reads ahead of the briefing sessions.

CCW will then hold a briefing session with the panellists, which will be facilitated by Taylor McKenzie Research. The session may also be attended by CCW's policy leads, company engagement managers or external subject matter experts depending on the key topics or themes covered. Company representatives will not be in attendance at the briefing sessions. The briefing session will be chaired by a member of the CCW Board.

Panellists will be required to attend all briefing sessions to be prepared for the activities in the Accountability Sessions. This will also help them to prioritise what topics they would like to discuss with their company.

CCW and Taylor McKenzie Research will also hold dedicated briefing sessions for the Chair of the Accountability Session to ensure that they are updated on the key agenda items.

Following the publication of company performance data in July each year, the autumn briefing sessions will include the latest performance data.

7.2. Code of Conduct

During the briefing sessions, panellists will be briefed on the Code of Conduct and key themes considered for the Accountability Session.

Panellists attending the briefing sessions are encouraged to act in the spirit of making improvements across the whole consumer base.

Please refer to Appendix 11.4 for the general Code of Conduct for all briefing and Accountability Sessions.

¹ A "barometer survey" is a type of recurring survey designed to track changes in attitudes, perceptions, or behaviours over time. They are conducted in regular intervals: monthly, quarterly, or annually, to observe shifts. The core questions remain the same to allow for comparison over time. In the context of consumer panels, the barometer surveys will help track customer satisfaction with water and waste services. The outputs of the barometer survey will inform panel discussions about local issues that panellists wish to prioritise and hold their company to account on or could trigger an ad-hoc Accountability Session if needed.

² Spotlight surveys consist of "light touch questions" typically referring to questions that are non-intrusive, easy to answer and used for engagement. In the context of consumer panels, spotlight research will be conducted each month, for each company. Some of the research questions might apply to all companies. Others might just apply to a subsection of affected companies. In addition, there may be the occasional ad hoc piece of research such as an incident, media enquiry, etc. This will take place alongside the other panel activities.

8. Accountability Sessions

8.1. Arranging the sessions

CCW will liaise with Taylor McKenzie Research, the panellists and the company to agree the time and date of each Accountability Session. The invites for the sessions will be managed by CCW. The agenda for each session will be circulated one week in advance.

8.2. Technology

Each Accountability Session will be held as a virtual meeting.

CCW has carefully considered the merits and potential drawbacks of 'virtual' and 'in person' sessions. Due to the disparate and distant geographical areas covered by some water companies, we have decided that a virtual meeting is most likely to allow more people to attend from a variety of backgrounds. Attendees will need access to Zoom on a phone or laptop, along with a webcam to support interactivity.

8.3. Reporting

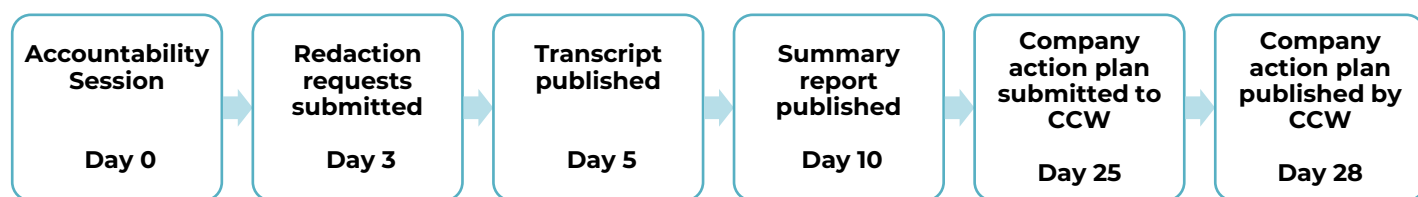
CCW will publish a transcript of the discussion at each Accountability Session within 5 working days and publish a summary report of the key points discussed within 10 working days.

The transcript will be a true record of what was said but will not name individual panellists. All attendees must be mindful of this. Panellists can contact Taylor McKenzie Research within 3 working days of the meeting if they want any sensitive information redacting.

To help create a written record of the Accountability Session, the meeting will be recorded by Taylor McKenzie Research on behalf of CCW. Attendees will be informed in advance that the meeting is being recorded, and the facilitator or Chair will remind all attendees at the start of the session. The recording will be deleted once the transcript is completed.

Following the session, a series of reports will be published. Progress against the action plan will be followed up with the water company by CCW. As appropriate, they will be shared with relevant stakeholders.

Reporting process



8.4. Launch of the Accountability Sessions

The first Accountability Sessions will take place between March and May 2026. Responses from the Barometer and Spotlight surveys, and other ad hoc issues raised through the panel platform, will inform a prioritisation exercise where panellists identify the issues they want to raise at the sessions. This will be an opportunity to test panel processes, resourcing requirements, the format of materials for panellists and co-ordination across teams for CCW, water companies and wider stakeholders.

This will take place across all the panels and the process will be reviewed on an ongoing basis as lessons are learnt and processes refined.

In autumn 2026, the second series of Accountability Sessions will take place. These will introduce the review of company performance and the creation of company action plans, which will be monitored by both CCW and the panels.

9. Action plans

Companies should share a draft action plan with the CCW panels' team within 25 working days of the Accountability Session and publish their action plans on working day 28. Companies are encouraged to host this information on a dedicated page on their website, where further information about the progress of their action plans and the work of the panels can be found. CCW will also publish all action plans.

CCW will liaise with companies through its usual company engagement channels to monitor progress against the action plans.

Accountability Sessions will be held every six months, where panel members will have the opportunity to discuss progress on the actions plans with companies. Companies will be expected to provide an update on progress with CCW, that can be shared with panellists in the pre-accountability briefing session.

Companies are also encouraged to keep their own website up to date in terms of progress against the action plan.

10. Ad-hoc Accountability Sessions

The panels can request ad hoc Accountability Sessions in response to extreme events that have a material impact on customers. We expect that a limited number of ad hoc sessions will take place each year, where significant consumer concerns are raised.

There is not an exhaustive list of reasons for why an ad hoc Accountability Session could be called but examples may include:

- An incident that has had a significant impact on a large number of consumers.
- In response to media coverage that the panel feel has a material impact on customers.
- A water company scoring less than 30% of the total score for all water companies in the monthly Barometer survey on something key e.g. clean water, or a 30% drop month on month on one of the key measures e.g. value for money, trust, satisfaction with water or waste services.
- Lots of panellists mentioning the same issue, that has not reported in the media

As ad hoc sessions are more urgent and reactive, a different process will apply. This process will be added to the Terms of Reference once it has been confirmed with Taylor McKenzie Research.

11. Appendix

11.1 Action plan template

Action #	Date Raised	Description of the action	Category	Company Response	Specific actions (done or doing)	Additional Narrative if required	Deadline	Outcome	Date closed
Type of action: Information/clarification about actions that are already planned or have happened - see example 1 Change to local activity or approach - example 2							Deadline Timescale to be set by company, with agreement of the relevant panel. CCW to track progress at quarterly meetings and interim discussions. The action plan will be shared with the consumer panellists ahead of the next accountability session, to demonstrate companies' progress on issues raised.		
1	Date of panel meeting	Example 1: Significant new housing being developed in an area where the storm overflow frequently overflows. How can the company ensure that the storm overflow will not be triggered any more with this new housing development?	Storm Overflows	Example 1: Company is to provide clarity about how these issues have been considered already and explain what they can and cannot influence and list action item			Company sets timescale and panel challenges or agrees	Customers have new information about the decision that has been made	
2		Example 2: We have reviewed the company performance and notice that the company is not meeting its targets on Customer Measure for Experience (CMEX). The customer service for billing is an area that needs improving. What is the company doing to address this?	Billing	Company should explain the reasons for missing the CMEX target and agree with action items to address issue in a reasonable timeframe.			Company sets timescale and panel challenges or agrees	Customers have new information about the decision that has been made	

11.2 Measurement and evaluation of success

Water Voice will help CCW meet the strategic aim of increasing trust in the water sector by setting up and running consumer panels for all water companies in England and Wales, empowering consumers to hold their water companies to account.

This will contribute to us achieving our mission: *Ensure people are well-informed, treated fairly and have confidence in their water services.*

And our vision: *A water sector that listens to people and delivers exceptional, sustainable services that are accessible to all.*

CCW objectives	SMART measures of success
1 Build public trust by ensuring transparent, visible responses to consumer feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCW will publish a summary of Accountability Sessions within 10 working days of the session. • CCW will publish a transcript of Accountability Sessions within 5 working days. • Water companies will provide their action plans/responses within 25 working days of the Accountability Sessions.

- CCW will publish company action plans on day 28.

2 Empower panel members to influence water company plans through active engagement and regular dialogue.

After the Accountability Sessions at least 80% of panel members should report that:

- The right questions were asked of companies.
- They received a substantive response from the company to their questions.
- They felt well supported ahead of the sessions, so they were able to ask questions.

3 Strengthen accountability with recurring, interactive Accountability Sessions that drive meaningful action.

- At least two Accountability Sessions are held per year, per water company area.
- After the Accountability Sessions at least 80% of panel members should report that their company's action plan would lead to measurable outcomes.

4 Deliver quick consumer insights that guide decision making across the water sector.

- CCW will publish panel's research every month on the CCW website.
- After the Accountability Sessions at least 80% of panel members should report that they felt the company was acting on what they told them.

5 Track and showcase measurable outcomes from panel activities and research to highlight tangible progress.

- All company action plans with measurable outcomes will be published every 6 months.

11.3 Six-month report to DEFRA and the Welsh Government

Following CCW Board approval, biannual reports will be submitted to DEFRA and the Welsh Government on how the consumer panels are holding companies to account, following each round of Accountability Sessions. These reports will also be published on the [CCW website](#).

11.4 Code of Conduct and behaviour

The Accountability Sessions aim to allow the sharing of concerns and planned actions between water companies and their consumers.

However, there may be instances where the topics being discussed are emotive and there is a difference in views between the consumer panellists and the company. Where this happens, the Chair and the facilitator will aim to bring the discussion back to a constructive exchange.

All session attendees are expected to act in the spirit of making improvements across the whole consumer base.

In accordance with best practice for virtual and hybrid meetings, we expect:

- All participants to keep their microphones muted when not speaking and to unmute themselves while speaking.
- All participants to be on camera, unless connectivity issues or specific reasons prevent this.
- Participants to be invited to speak after raising their virtual hand.

To help create a comfortable environment for all panel members, observers must keep their cameras and microphones turned off. This is to ensure that observers are unable to actively participate in any form and can only observe the proceedings of the Accountability Sessions.

If the Chair or facilitator believe that it would be beneficial to invite an observer to speak on a point they will do so.

Some guidelines for Accountability Sessions are as follows:

Medium	Mechanism
Orally – ‘raise hand’ (or equivalent) during meeting	An attendee can indicate that they want to ask a verbal question using the ‘raise hand’ option in the virtual meeting.
Chat (or Q&A)	An attendee can put a question into the chat (or Q&A).

11.5 Review

This document will be reviewed after 12 months of operation and thereafter every two years unless a change in the approach to consumer panels means that earlier review is necessary.

This review process will follow CCW’s internal guidelines and procedures for document review and oversight.

Version

Version	Date	Author	Title	Description	Reason for update
1.0	7/11/25	Redacted	Consumer Panels Manager	Published version	First version
1.1	20/02/26	Redacted	Senior Consumer Panel Lead	Published version	Action plan updated and detail added to the ad hoc triggers

CCW

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