



The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

Water Voice - Accountability Session

Summary report

Water company: Hafren Dyfrdwy

Accountability Session date: 20.04.2026

Delivered by Taylor McKenzie
Research & Energy Saving Trust

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Questions created and asked by community members



Community members identified three priority questions they wanted to put directly to Hafren Dyfrdwy during the Accountability Session.

The questions were developed through a structured process involving the full Water Voice community (c.50 members). In January and February 2026, members collectively identified and refined priority themes through Spotlight surveys. These priorities were then shaped into draft questions during a dedicated briefing session, before being finalised and formally put to Hafren Dyfrdwy at the Accountability Session.

Each question was led by a community member and explored in depth during the session. Hafren Dyfrdwy provided on-the-record responses, with commitments and actions discussed in real time.

	Topic	Community member question
Q1	Value for money, rising bills and transparency	<p><i>“As customers we are feeling the impact of rising bills alongside wider cost of living pressures, but the bigger frustration is the lack of a clear and visible explanation of why costs are increasing...</i></p> <p><i>How will you clearly demonstrate that rising bills are fair and justified and ensure customers can easily see what they are paying for and what local improvements they are funding?”</i></p>
Q2	Communication and access to information	<p><i>“At the moment, customers are too often left saying, “I didn’t know about that”...</i></p> <p><i>What will you change in how you communicate so that customers consistently receive important information in ways that work for them, through the channels they use, rather than missing it because it is not reaching them?”</i></p>
Q3	Customer support, awareness, and early intervention	<p><i>“I had a really positive experience when Hafren Dyfrdwy noticed I had fallen into arrears and got in touch. That kind of bill welfare check-in can make a real difference...</i></p> <p><i>How will Hafren Dyfrdwy do more to identify customers who may be struggling, offer earlier bill welfare check-ins and make sure support is easy to access and not just something people are expected to find for themselves online?”</i></p>

The sections that follow set out each question in turn, alongside the actions discussed and the expectations community members have for delivery through the company’s published action plan. This will be published on **Monday 1st June**.

Executive summary - insights by question



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The Accountability Session for Hafren Dyfrdwy highlighted customers' calls for clearer communication, better explanation of rising bills and local investment, and more visible and proactive support for those who may be struggling; Hafren Dyfrdwy acknowledged these concerns, pointed to ongoing improvements and broadly accepted the actions raised.

Q1

Value for money, rising bills and transparency

Hafren Dyfrdwy said bills had risen but remained the lowest in Wales, driven by investment, inflation and resilience work including the Wrexham ring main, and said local information was already being shared through the website and community engagement, while accepting the website is not yet user-friendly enough.

Community members were only partly reassured, wanting a clearer explanation of where money goes, what funds investment rather than repair, whether profit is being made and what extra spending is delivering locally, with some saying they had not heard about major schemes.

Discussion focused on making bill rises clearer and more locally visible through simpler bill-allocation information, better visual explanation and direct links between rising costs and recognisable improvements, which the company said it would clarify next quarter.

Customers wanted clearer, more tangible and more local explanations of rising bills, with visible links between extra cost, specific projects and real customer benefit.

Q2

Communication and access to information

Hafren Dyfrdwy said it was trying to communicate across a broad customer base using a mix of channels, including website content, bills, social media, WhatsApp, local drop-ins, school outreach and its community vehicle, and said a new billing system should help it better capture customer preferences and tailor contact.

Community members accepted that no single channel would suit everyone, but felt the current approach still left information fragmented, too traditional and too easy to miss, with calls for simpler online journeys, plain English, a more modern social media presence, and an app or digital account bringing bills, usage and help together.

Discussion focused on making communication more joined-up, easier to find and tailored to customer preferences, while retaining offline, accessible and personal routes for those who need them.

Customers felt communication was too fragmented and traditional, with a need for simpler, preference-led and more visible updates across both digital and local channels.

Q3

Customer support, awareness, and early intervention

Hafren Dyfrdwy outlined existing support for customers who may be struggling, including affordability help, the Priority Services Register, proactive check-ins for missed payments and recent movers, and a Better Off calculator designed to guide people to suitable support.

Community members welcomed the positive examples shared and the clear intent to intervene earlier, but questioned how consistently this happens, how visible support is to those who need it most, and whether too much still depends on customers finding the right information themselves.

Discussion focused on making early identification more consistent, promoting support more actively through digital and offline routes, and ensuring vulnerable customers receive tailored, empathetic help from well-trained staff.

Customers welcomed existing support, but wanted it made more visible, offered more consistently and delivered by empathetic, well-trained customer service.

Actions agreed during the Accountability Session



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Q1

Value for money, rising bills and transparency

- Use simple, customer-friendly visuals to show where bills go, what is driving increases and how money is allocated.
- Link rising bills to named local projects and visible outcomes so customers can see what extra spend delivers.
- Make existing bill-allocation information easier to find and provide clear progress updates within the next quarter.

Q2

Communication and access to information

- Improve customer ability to customise preferred communication channels, formats and accessibility needs.
- Use clearer online journeys and plain-English so that key information is easy to find, understand and act on.
- Develop a more connected, easy to use digital offering, including improved online billing and app feasibility.
- Strengthen modern and local outreach through social media, community pages, agents and visible in-person outreach.

Q3

Customer support, awareness and early intervention

- Promote support schemes more visibly (both digital/offline), so customers know what help exists and how to access it.
- Expand and standardise early intervention checks, so proactive welfare support is offered more consistently.
- Set and maintain clear training standards so vulnerable customers receive empathetic and personalised support.



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Q1. Value for money, rising bills and transparency



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Question asked by Hafren Dyfrdwy Community member:

“As customers we are feeling the impact of rising bills alongside wider cost of living pressures, but the bigger frustration is the lack of a clear and visible explanation of why costs are increasing...

How will you clearly demonstrate that rising bills are fair and justified and ensure customers can easily see what they are paying for and what local improvements they are funding?”

Hafren Dyfrdwy said bills had risen but remained the lowest in Wales, driven by investment, inflation and resilience work including the Wrexham ring main, and said local information was already being shared through the website and community engagement, while accepting the website is not yet user-friendly enough.

Community members were only partly reassured, wanting a clearer explanation of where money goes, what funds investment rather than repair, whether profit is being made and what extra spending is delivering locally, with some saying they had not heard about major schemes.

Discussion focused on making bill rises clearer and more locally visible through simpler bill-allocation information, better visual explanation and direct links between rising costs and recognisable improvements, which the company said it would clarify next quarter.

Actions

- Use simple, customer-friendly visuals to show where bills go, what is driving increases and how money is allocated.
- Link rising bills to named local projects and visible outcomes so customers can see what extra spend delivers.
- Make existing bill-allocation information easier to find and provide clear progress updates within the next quarter.

“For every additional £10, £100, whatever, that’s raised by the company or paid by a consumer, what improvements will we see”

“The bigger frustration is the lack of a clear and visible explanation of why costs are increasing, what has changed and what we’re getting in return.”

“If the average person in Wrexham knew about this quite substantial capital investment, it would go some way to sort of explaining the increases in the bills.”



Customers wanted clearer, more tangible and more local explanations of rising bills, with visible links between extra cost, specific projects and real customer benefit.

Q1. Value for money, rising bills and transparency



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"You said" (Community member actions)	"We did" (Hafren Dyfrdwy response on the night)	What is the 'Ideal' Hafren Dyfrdwy response? (In the eyes of our community)	Timescale/ final comments
<p>Use simple, customer-friendly visuals to show where bills go, what is driving increases and how money is allocated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hafren Dyfrdwy maintains the lowest bills in Wales, but bills have increased. Explained increases are being driven by investment needs and inflation, including resilience works such as the Wrexham ring main. Confirmed a bill-allocation infographic already exists on the website and has previously been included in bills. Acknowledged the current website and presentation of investment information are below the desired standard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a clear, concise and customer-friendly explanation of bill allocation and the drivers of bill increases. Use simple visual formats to show "penny on the pound" spending – existing 'water-glass' visualisation the preferred format. Communicate and clarify on the profitability of Hafren Dyfrdwy. 	<p>Timescale: Deliverable within the next quarter.</p> <p>Company comment: Company said it would make existing infographics more visible and accessible, including by adding it to bills.</p> <p>Accepted the need to better articulate how rising bills relate to localised, visible outcomes.</p> <p>Welcomes feedback, and advised progress updates can be requested via email, or local pop-in points/community vehicles</p>
<p>Link rising bills to named local projects and visible outcomes so customers can see what extra spend delivers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gave the Wrexham ring main as a clear example of investment intended to improve supply reliability/resilience. More local information is being shared through the website and community engagement. Said the company is using local media, drop-ins and community presence to communicate major schemes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve communication around substantial projects so local residents know what is being funded in their area. Directly relate rising costs to specific local projects, expected benefits and tangible outcomes. Show what customers are getting back locally from additional spend. 	
<p>Make existing bill-allocation information easier to find and provide clear progress updates within the next quarter.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication channels are evolving on an ongoing, two-way basis. Working to create more accessible communication and expand community engagement, including drop-ins. Accepted that current visibility is not strong enough and that customers are not seeing existing information clearly enough. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make existing bill-allocation information easier to find and easier to understand. Provide clearer signposting to existing materials and updates on progress. Ensure customers can track improvement through regular, visible updates. 	

Note: This table is an excerpt from the full Action Plan. Hafren Dyfrdwy will provide formal responses to each action within 28 days of the session date. The updated plan will then be shared with participating community members for review and agreement.

Q2. Communication and access to information



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Question asked by Hafren Dyfrdwy Community member:

“At the moment, customers are too often left saying, “I didn’t know about that”...”

“What will you change in how you communicate so that customers consistently receive important information in ways that work for them, through the channels they use, rather than missing it because it is not reaching them?”

Hafren Dyfrdwy said it was trying to communicate across a broad customer base using a mix of channels, including website content, bills, social media, WhatsApp, local drop-ins, school outreach and its community vehicle, and said a new billing system should help it better capture customer preferences and tailor contact.

Community members accepted that no single channel would suit everyone, but felt the current approach still left information fragmented, too traditional and too easy to miss, with calls for simpler online journeys, plain English, a more modern social media presence, and an app or digital account bringing bills, usage and help together.

Discussion focused on making communication more joined-up, easier to find and tailored to customer preferences, while retaining offline, accessible and personal routes for those who need them.

Actions

- Improve customer ability to customise preferred communication channels, formats and accessibility needs.
- Use clearer online journeys and plain-English so that key information is easy to find, understand and act on.
- Develop a more connected, easy to use digital offering, including improved online billing and app feasibility.
- Strengthen modern and local outreach through social media, community pages, agents and visible in-person outreach.

“It’s a lot of information to put out there but I don’t think that it’s being put to the right to use, to the right people”

“If I had an app, that would be so much better and it would be more personalised to me and just be there at the click of a button.”

“It just needs improving a bit more, what we’re discussing”



Customers felt communication was too fragmented and traditional, with a need for simpler, preference-led and more visible updates across both digital and local channels.

Q2. Communication and access to information



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"You said" (Community member actions)	"We did" (Hafren Dyfrdwy response on the night)	What is the 'Ideal' Hafren Dyfrdwy response? (In the eyes of our community)	Timescale / final comments
<p>Improve customer ability to customise preferred communication channels, formats and accessibility needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlighted broad span of communication needs across customer base. Customers already use a mix of channels including bills, website, social media, in-person contact and local outreach. Confirmed customer preferences are accommodated (e.g. language choice) and that upcoming new billing system would better capture preferences going forward. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly signpost available communication options and make it easier for customers to customise. Capture and consistently apply comms preferences on channel, level of detail and language. Ensure offline, vulnerable and sensory-impaired customers remain properly supported. 	<p>Company comment: Language preference can be specified by email contact. Confirmed no bots/AI agents support agents used.</p>
<p>Use clearer online journeys and plain-English so that key information is easy to find, understand and act on.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charge explanations are being included with bills and information is available online. Acknowledged that some existing services and information are not being communicated clearly enough. Confirmed live chat/WhatsApp support already exists. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use plain English and jargon-free wording. Make online information easier to find, navigate and understand. Simplify technical usage data and present it in formats that are more relatable to customers. 	<p>Confirmed app in consideration, 'Kraken' system used as model.</p> <p>Acknowledged need for more connected digital services.</p>
<p>Develop a more connected, easy to use digital offering, including improved online billing and app feasibility.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online billing is already available. The new billing system should improve personalisation and digital engagement. Accepted the need for evolution of digital communications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move more billing and service information online in a clearer, layered format. Explore a Hafren Dyfrdwy app bringing together bills, usage, help and local updates. Facilitate shared accounts and integration with meters/usage tracking where viable. 	<p>Confirmed that improving communication approaches is a constant focus.</p> <p>Open to customer suggestions/feedback on new communication channels</p>
<p>Strengthen modern and local outreach through social media, community pages, agents and visible in-person outreach.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses Facebook, Instagram, local media, school outreach, councillor communication and the Dilys community vehicle. Acknowledged social media engagement is limited and current visibility is not strong enough. Confirmed personal contact points such as the hatch remain important. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use more visible and regular social media content across the channels customers actually use. Work with community pages, community agents and other trusted local routes. Build on the company's local presence and maintain in-person options where valued. 	<p>Further detail on actions/timescale expected in company action plan</p>

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Q3. Customer support, awareness and early intervention



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Question asked by Hafren Dyfrdwy Community member:

"I had a really positive experience when Hafren Dyfrdwy noticed I had fallen into arrears and got in touch. That kind of bill welfare check-in can make a real difference..."

How will Hafren Dyfrdwy do more to identify customers who may be struggling, offer earlier bill welfare check-ins and make sure support is easy to access and not just something people are expected to find for themselves online?"

Hafren Dyfrdwy outlined existing support for customers who may be struggling, including affordability help, the Priority Services Register, proactive check-ins for missed payments and recent movers, and a Better Off calculator designed to guide people to suitable support.

Community members welcomed the positive examples shared and the clear intent to intervene earlier, but questioned how consistently this happens, how visible support is to those who need it most, and whether too much still depends on customers finding the right information themselves.

Discussion focused on making early identification more consistent, promoting support more actively through digital and offline routes, and ensuring vulnerable customers receive tailored, empathetic help from well-trained staff.

Actions

- Promote support schemes more visibly (both digital/offline), so customers know what help exists and how to access it.
- Expand and standardise early intervention checks, so proactive welfare support is offered more consistently.
- Set and maintain clear training standards so vulnerable customers receive empathetic and personalised support.

"It just feeds into that communication piece on how you're actually making these things accessible to your customers and how do customers know of them?"

"Whether you've got a system in place to ensure that every customer, regardless of how much they've gone over, gets that customer connection and that call"

"Making sure the right staff are in the right roles, have they been trained? Are they empathetic?"



Customers welcomed existing support, but wanted it made more visible, offered more consistently and delivered by empathetic, well-trained customer service.

Q3. Customer support, awareness and early intervention



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"You said" (Community member actions)	"We did" (Hafren Dyfrdwy response on the night)	What is the 'Ideal' Hafren Dyfrdwy response? (In the eyes of our community)	Timescale / final comments
<p>Promote support schemes more visibly (both digital/offline), so customers know what help exists and how to access it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmed existing support routes including the Priority Services Register, affordability support, the 'Here To Help Hub' and the 'Better Off' calculator. The 'Better Off' calculator was introduced to help customers identify suitable support and has helped customers access around £67,000 of additional support. Acknowledged the website still needs improvement and that support information may not yet be visible enough. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve advertising, communication and outreach around support tools and schemes. Use both digital and non-digital routes, including social media, flyers, leaflets and community hubs. Make it easier for customers to understand what support exists and where to go for help. 	<p>Timescale: 6 months proposed</p> <p>Company comment: Actions broadly accepted, Hafren Dyfrdwy stated it would confirm later what could realistically be achieved in that period – further comment and actions expected within company action plan.</p> <p>Confirmed staff training is continuous, that Hafren Dyfrdwy has a dedicated care and assistance team, that staff are specifically recruited for empathy and the right soft skills.</p> <p>Uses additional specialist training (3rd partners e.g. Dementia Friends) to strengthen staff ability to handle difficult and vulnerable-customer conversations.</p>
<p>Expand and standardise early intervention checks, so proactive welfare support is offered more consistently.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hafren Dyfrdwy already carries out early intervention work, including missed-payment outreach and welfare checks for some recent movers. This had reduced during a busy period but had recently been restarted following recruitment, with capacity expected to increase. Indicated this is an area it expects to do more in over the next 12 months. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue and expand early intervention checks so they are available more consistently and more widely. Make proactive support less dependent on individual cases and more clearly structured. Ensure support is tailored to accessibility needs and different communication preferences where possible. 	
<p>Set and maintain clear training standards so vulnerable customers receive empathetic and personalised support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses WhatsApp and human-first support – no bots or AI agents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set a clear training commitment for high-standard staff education e.g. a 'model' customer service agent Ensure potentially vulnerable customers receive personalised, sensitive and empathetic support. Put the right people in the right roles and maintain those standards consistently across the team. 	

Note: This table is an excerpt from the full Action Plan. Hafren Dyfrdwy will provide formal responses to each action within 28 days of the session date. The updated plan will then be shared with participating community members for review and agreement.

What happens after the Accountability Session?

After the Accountability Session, there is a clear and structured follow-up process.



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Publication and transparency

Within 5 working days

A full (anonymised) transcript of the session was [published](#) on **Monday 27th April**

Within 10 working days

A plain-English summary is published, setting out:
The questions asked.
The key points raised by Community members.
The actions agreed for inclusion in the action plan.
Anything recorded as *not yet agreed*.
Tuesday 5th May



Action plan

Within 28 days

The water company must share its **action plan**, setting out how it will deliver the agreed actions.
The action plan will be **shared with the Water Voice community on Monday 1st June**



Customer feedback

Participants will be asked, via a short survey, whether they feel the action plan:

- ✓ Reflects what was agreed in the session
- ✓ Goes far enough to address customer concerns

This feedback forms part of CCW's ongoing monitoring and follow-up with the company and helps inform future accountability work.



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Water Voice - Accountability Session

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Annex: Research approach

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Background



What is an Accountability Session?

An Accountability Session is a formal, facilitated meeting where **water consumers directly question senior executives from their water company** about performance, service failures and issues of concern – and **agree the actions they want the company to take**.

They sit at the heart of CCW's statutory role to strengthen consumer voice and ensure companies respond transparently and meaningfully.

*<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2025/5/enacted>

Why do they exist?

Accountability Sessions exist because customers deserve a real say in how their water company performs. They give people a direct line to the people in charge – not through a survey, not through a complaint form, but face-to-face.

For years, customers have felt that water companies weren't listening closely enough. *Water (Special Measures) Act 2025** requiring a relevant undertaker to have arrangements in place for involving consumers in decisions of the undertaker that are likely to have a material impact on consumer matters.

These sessions make that happen. They create a space where customers can:

- Ask honest questions
- Raise the issues that really affect them
- Agree the actions they expect the company to take next.

It's all about making the process fair, open, and focused on what matters most to the people who actually use and pay for the service.

Objectives

What the session aims to achieve



1. Give customers a real voice

These sessions make sure customers aren't just "heard" – their views actually guide the conversation and shape what happens next.

2. Make companies answer directly to the people they serve

Senior water company leaders must respond openly, honestly, and in real time. No hiding behind reports or press statements.

3. Agree clear actions that lead to real improvements

By the end of each session, everyone should be clear on:

- ✓ what the company will do
- ✓ how they'll do it
- ✓ how customers will know things have improved.

4. Build trust through transparency

Everything is published – the questions, the answers, the agreed actions – so customers can see what's happening and whether companies are following through.

5. Make sure all types of customers are represented

People from different backgrounds, ages, abilities and regions take part, ensuring the outcomes reflect real experiences across the community.

Outputs

By the close of the process, this Accountability Session will have:

- Provided CCW with **robust, publishable evidence** of consumer concerns and company responses.
- Established a clear and transparent set of customer-agreed actions that the water company must reflect in its published action plan. The action plan itself is published by the company following the session, in line with the accountability process.
- Given consumers confidence that their participation leads to **real scrutiny and follow-through**, reinforcing the credibility of the accountability process.
- Informed future regulatory engagement by highlighting **systemic or recurring issues** requiring wider attention.

Together, this ensures the session delivers both **immediate accountability** and **longer-term value** for consumers and the sector.

Methodology

How does it work?

CCW

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01



Prioritising what matters most

1. We listen to what customers tell us each month

Through Barometer & Spotlight surveys and the online community

2. We play back what they said

In the January Spotlight survey, we show customers the issues they raised & ask them to prioritise the most important ones.

3. Confirm their priorities

In the February Spotlight survey, customers confirm if they agree with which points matter most.

02



Getting ready (Briefing session)

Selected 12 customers join a 2-hour online (via Zoom) briefing before the main meeting.

Everyone gets clear, easy-to-read information beforehand so they feel confident and prepared.

The facilitator talks them through:

- How the session will work
- The issues they've prioritised
- How to shape their questions & come up with a set of questions for each priority.

We will brief the CCW Chair separately at this point & remind them on their role, share guide & prioritised topics / Priorities will be sent the Water Companies at this point

03



The Accountability Session (Main meeting)

12 customers take part in an online session (via Zoom) with a senior water company representative for 2 hours.

TMcK facilitator & Chair guiding the conversation:

- Customers ask their prepared questions
- Challenge the company's answers
- Explore what needs to change.

Live polls let everyone share honest views – even those who prefer not to speak out loud.

Welsh panels will be given the option of English, Welsh or simultaneous translation .

04



Agreeing what should happen next

During the main accountability session, after each issue is discussed, the facilitator checks whether customers feel the company's proposed actions are good enough.

Together, they work towards a clear **consensus** on what actions the company must take.

05



Publishing the outcomes and following up

A summary is produced showing: the questions asked, how the company responded, and the actions agreed.

- CCW publishes a **transcript within 5 working days**
- CCW publishes a **summary within 10 working days**
- The company must publish its **action plan by day 28**

Panellists are asked short follow-up questions about whether the plan reflects what was agreed.

CCW then tracks progress and updates panellists before the next session.

[Priorities will be shared with the ISG]

Sample

Who takes part in an Accountability Session



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We brought together a **small, representative group of around 12 people** for each accountability session.

This number keeps the conversation manageable and ensures everyone has the chance to speak.

Each person is selected by the panel manager from their panel of 50 participants.

Our panel managers are responsible for selecting a representative range of participants and ensure that anyone who has expressed a keen interest in taking part in an accountability session is included at this stage.

We make sure each session of 12 includes the following types of panellists:

- **Age** - younger adults, middle-aged adults and older customers (2 per age bracket)
- **Gender** - a balanced mix (at least 5 males & 5 females)
- **Income levels** - including low-income households (3 financially vulnerable, 3 x 20-40k, 3 x £40k-60k & 2 x £60k+)
- **Location** - Rural and Urban water users (different house-types represented)
- **Ethnic backgrounds** - reflecting the local population, 2-3 from an ethnic minority background
- **People with accessibility, neurodivergent or additional support needs** (at least 1)
- **Different customer types** - e.g metered/unmetered, renters/homeowners
- **Different attitudes** – including 3 x positive, 3 x neutral & 3 x negative customers
- **Bathing water users** – 3 regular users (for WaSC panels)
- **Welsh speakers** – at least 2 Welsh speakers within our two Welsh panels & options for accountability session language

This ensures all voices are represented, not just the loudest or most confident.



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Thank you!



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