



13 November 2020

Dear Council Leader,

Thames Water response to COVID-19

As we move into a second national lockdown, I wanted to write and update you on the steps that we continue to take to support vulnerable customers through COVID-19, whilst continuing to provide safe and reliable water and wastewater services to 15 million customers across London and the Thames Valley.

As key workers we have a responsibility to provide all aspects of our service to our customers in a safe way. We will continue to make sure we do this while protecting our people and our customers, with strict social distancing measures to protect our staff and the communities we work in.

We know that the pandemic has created some very significant challenges for many of our customers, and that these are likely to continue for some time. We responded to these challenges by putting a range of measures in place during the first national lockdown and we are continuing these initiatives while the outbreak persists. The key actions we have taken are:

- Launching a flexible payments scheme for those customers who have been financially affected by Covid-19. More than 6,600 customers have benefited from this so far.
- Committing £4 million this financial year to our Customer Assistance Fund, which provides debt support and financial help for customers with outstanding bills.
- Becoming the largest charitable funder of debt advice within the Thames Valley region after doubling our independent Trust Fund donation to £1 million to support customers who are in financial need.
- Supporting 185,000 low-income households with discounts of up to 50% off their water bill. We intend to increase the number of customers on our social tariff to 300,000 by 2025.
- Enabling more customers to sign up to our Priority Services Register. By sharing their individual needs we can tailor our services to support them in an emergency, including delivering bottled water and offering alternative methods of communication. We have more than 83,000 customers signed up and aim to reach 410,000 by 2025. Customers can sign up at: <https://www.thameswater.co.uk/help/extra-care/priority-services>.

If you feel that any of your constituents would benefit from these measures, please refer them to our website: <https://www.thameswater.co.uk/my-account/billing-and-payment/help-paying-your-bill>.

Additional measures we took during the first lockdown included supporting 3,500 members of staff to work from home, No Thames Water employees have been furloughed or made redundant due to COVID-19, and we have also continued to recruit, particularly targeting employees of local companies facing redundancy. This included 264 external hires at the height of the first wave between March and June, including 29 apprentices and 24 graduate employees.

We are also conscious that many of our customers may not have access to their own outdoor space, so we have taken steps to keep our nature reserves open to allow local residents to exercise and get fresh air, whilst following social distancing guidelines. With the stress and uncertainty of COVID-19, we believe it is vital for us to continue to provide the public with green space in natural surroundings, supporting their health and wellbeing during this challenging time.

I hope you find this helpful. If you do have any questions about our response, please do get in touch.

Yours sincerely



George Mayhew
Corporate Affairs Director