

**Wessex Water MALG South West  
update  
22<sup>nd</sup> July 2020  
Kate Robbins, Head of Customer Policy  
Zoom Call**

# Impact of Covid-19

- Wessex Water has a series of business continuity plans, one of which covers the response to a pandemic, and has been the basis for our activity since mid March
- We established executive and tactical teams meeting daily, and also co-ordinated with Water UK Platinum
- We managed to move around 1,000 colleagues to home working within several days, including all call centre agents – a remarkable achievement by our IT colleagues
- At its peak, we had around 12% of colleagues isolated due to Covid-19, the great majority Shielding as they had a medical condition or lived with someone showing symptoms – around half of these were able to work from home, and absence levels have now returned to normal
- We have not taken any support funding from the government and none of our staff have been furloughed – where staff have had a reduced workload they have either been redeployed or assisting in voluntary community work



# Impact of Covid-19 – Performance

- The business has continued to perform well throughout this time
- Our operational colleagues managed to comply with social distancing requirements and keep all operational sites running
- Construction work was shut down for a short period whilst we reviewed COVID compliance site-by-site – all construction work has now fully resumed
- We stopped non-essential customer-facing work for the first six weeks, including metering – we have now brought work back on line and reduced any backlog. Throughout we have kept customers informed and where we have non-essential work have managed to triage or resolve many issues over the phone – we have remained within Guaranteed standards timescales and where customer meter options have been paused we have given free water
- In the first six weeks following the move to remote working, we handled 53,000 calls from customers, with a consistent response rate with the three months prior to Covid-19
- We have started to return to the office with special distancing and having undergone throughout risk assessment based on COVID-19 rules

# Impact of Covid-19 - Key workers



Dean at our depot stocking his van with emergency repair equipment.

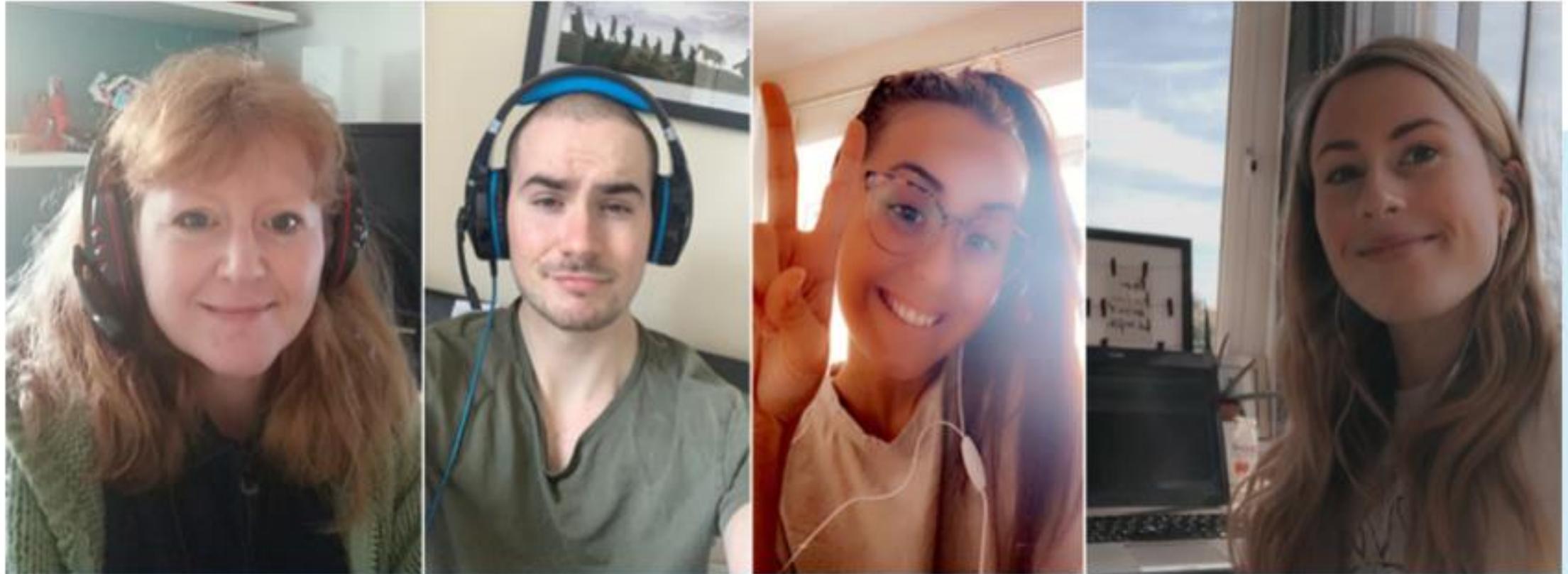


Megan is among our colleagues carrying out essential visits to our water recycling centres.



Rob carrying out an emergency repair to fix a leak.

# Impact of Covid-19 – Working from Home



Here are Jody, Alfie, Brooke and Hannah working remotely and ready to take your call.

# Impact of Covid-19 - Affordability

- We have taken a number of measures to support customers financially, some of which are above and beyond our usual schemes. These have included 4,000 + customer payment breaks and 900 additional flexible plans. We are also signposting to longer term help where needed.
- We have proactively identified and contacted 70,000 customers who usually pay in cash or via Payzone outlets, promoting alternative ways they can pay their bill without leaving their house.
- There has been no noticeable impact on household collections, this will be monitored as furlough scheme reduces/comes to an end.
- We stopped all new court claims and put in place a strategy to encourage financially vulnerable customers to contact us for help.
- From 1 June we restarted court claims on pre-CV19 debt although this excludes those who may be in vulnerable circumstances and those who have contacted us to explain their current situation and are now seeking additional support.
- We stopped bill related home visits and liaising with customers via phone instead.
- We are also working with regulators, government and CCW on supporting customers who find themselves financially vulnerable in the medium term particularly once forbearance and government support comes to an end
- We believe our current affordability support package is fit for purpose but are predicting an uplift in customers on social tariffs and our Restart scheme in the early years of the AMP
- For more information on the support we can offer, please visit our [Partnerhub](#).



# Impact of Covid-19 – NHS Rebate



- NHS worker reached out to us as they are following strict national guidance on infection prevention and control so need to wash uniforms more often at home.
- Many of these workers are taking on additional shifts, and their uniform must be washed at 60°C and separately to any other clothes.
- We launched our new scheme to support those frontline workers in our NHS.
- For those who are on a meter and would have an increase in their bill, we wanted to ensure they are not adversely affected through adhering to their duties.
- Over 15,000 applications to date.
- For more information and to apply for the NHS rebate visit [wessexwater.co.uk/NHSrebate](https://wessexwater.co.uk/NHSrebate)



"It's wonderful a company is finding a different and impactful way of recognising NHS staff during these difficult times, one less thing for us all to think about. Thank you" – Wessex Water customer

# Impact of Covid-19 - Vulnerability

- We contacted 5,000 of our 15,000 Priority Services customers, who have shared their email addresses with us, to let them know of affordability support and how we were working during the crisis.
- We are encouraging anyone who is shielding to sign up to Priority Services online so that we can ensure we support them.
- We contacted stakeholders such as local councils, advice networks and via our PartnerHub to encourage them to help sign up.
- We have been proactive on social media advertising the Priority Services scheme.
- Our Vulnerability Experts have cascaded advice on council community hubs and helplines to their customer facing colleagues.

**If you are working with any clients that you think might benefit from signing up to our priority services register you can sign them up using the following link:**

[www.wessexwater.co.uk/priorityservices](http://www.wessexwater.co.uk/priorityservices)



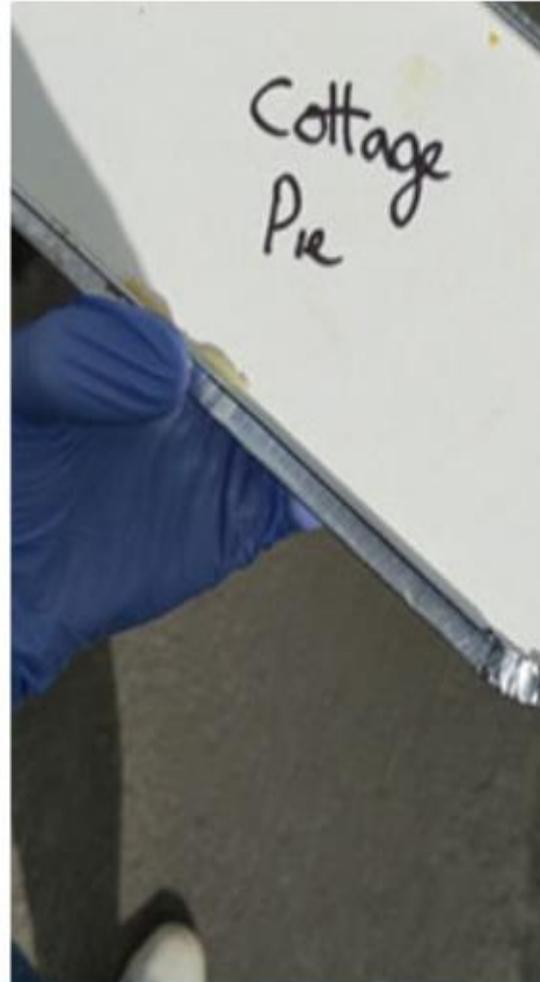
# Impact of Covid-19 - Community

- The new Wessex Water Foundation, a multi-million pound initiative launched by the water and sewerage company, will mainly benefit people hit hardest by the Covid-19 crisis in its first year.
- Via the foundation we have already:
  - We've partnered with Age UK Bath & North East Somerset to deliver 6,500 hot lunches to vulnerable elderly people who are self-isolating in and around Bath, who would normally benefit from a vital lunch club service. Using surplus produce from the restaurant in our head office, delicious meals prepared by our caterers Baxter Storey have been transported around the city by a group of our volunteers.
  - Supported many of our staff to volunteer in their communities during the lockdown period.
  - Given £120,000 to local emergency appeals with the community foundations to support local groups responding to the Covid-19 crisis
- The Wessex Water Recovery Fund will open for applications from groups in the Wessex Water area from late 2020.



# Impact of Covid-19 – Helping Others

Wessex Water  
YTL GROUP



Our volunteers out and about delivering hot lunches to elderly people in isolation.