

Stakeholder Newsletter



from
Southern
Water® 

Focus on Customers and Community

Every day our teams work tirelessly for our customers and for our communities.

Here are some of the highlights from the past few months, especially targeting the cost of living crisis that many of our customers are facing. We welcome the opportunity to spend time understanding and supporting our communities, so please get in touch if you think we can do more together. We look forward to updating you over the coming months.

Katy Taylor,
Chief Customer Officer, Southern Water



£98m to support vulnerable customers

We know the cost of living crisis is affecting many customers.

We have put in place a £98 million package of support for 125,000 households. Our basic discount of 20-25% has been increased to 45% and all existing social tariff customers will move to this higher discount by April 2023. The support will also continue to help customers that are in greater need, to access bill discounts of up to 90%.

To help those facing the challenge around rising food and energy costs, we are also giving out 20 community centre energy grants of £1,000 each this winter to ensure community hubs and spaces can stay open and stay warm, supporting around 6,000 people each

week to continue to attend foodbanks, befriender cafes, support groups and wellbeing classes.

Meanwhile, Southern Water teams are working closely with many organisations who have direct contact with customers struggling financially, such as regional Citizens Advice hubs, Job Centres and Food Banks, running face-to-face support surgeries with customers. The funding is also providing a £30 food voucher to around 3,700 families in West Sussex as part of a Free School Meals initiative.

Anyone who is not on an existing discount tariff but thinks they may be entitled to discounts on their bills can complete [an online form on the Southern Water website](#), where they can also find out information about community grants and further support.

If customers are struggling to pay their bills they can contact our specialist Affordability Team on 0800 027 0800 (Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm)

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Your feedback matters

Let us know what you thought of this issue. Please email:
Stakeholderteam@southernwater.co.uk

Hardship Fund

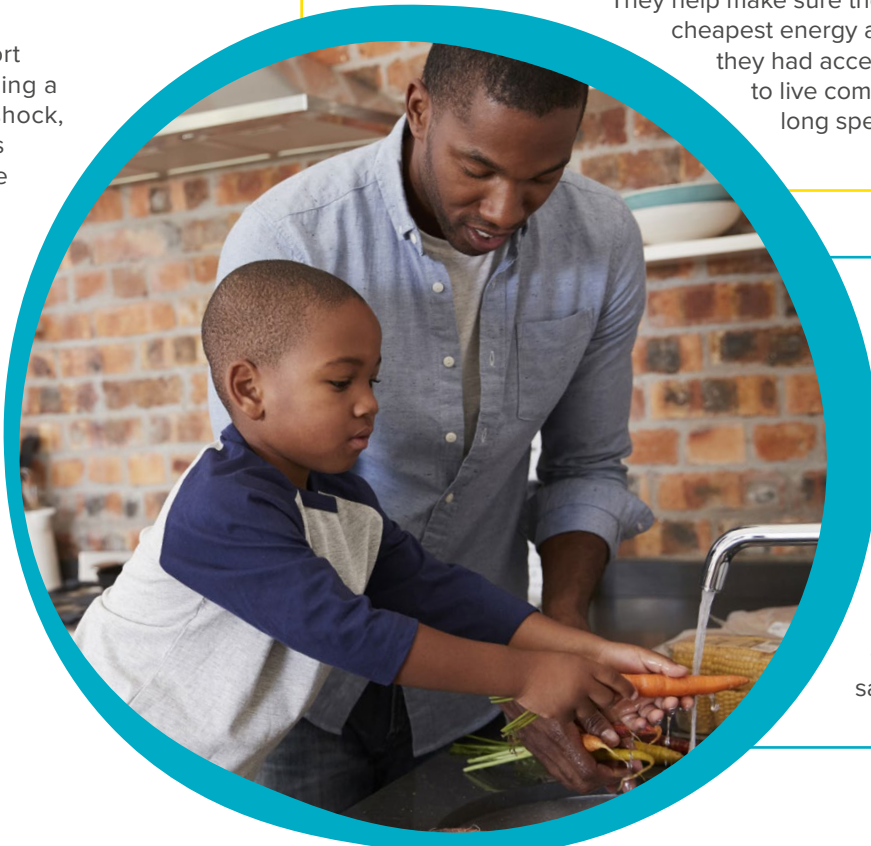
Our Hardship Fund has a budget of £20,000 each month to support our customers in vulnerable circumstances by providing debt relief, bill reductions or purchasing household items.

Debt relief supports customers who may be the victim of domestic abuse, have a debilitating illness or have suffered a bereavement, and are unable to pay their debt.

Bill reductions support customers experiencing a short-term financial shock, typically through loss of employment or the death of the family's main earner.

We also offer small grants to customers when we see a specific need such as replacing a broken washing machine or cooker.

If customers are struggling they can access help through our website: [What if I can't pay my bill?](https://www.southernwater.co.uk/what-if-i-cant-pay-my-bill/) ([southernwater.co.uk](https://www.southernwater.co.uk))



Helping our customers get back home and well from hospital

We are proud to be part of the Home and Well partnership, which won the Customer Vulnerability Award last year.

The scheme asked healthcare professionals to refer patients who would benefit from various types of support when leaving hospital. Our team has been promoting the scheme with other health-related organisations to create links across our region and make sure everyone knows what support Southern Water can offer.

We support advisers from Home and Well to be available in hospitals' discharge wards as patients get ready to go home.

They help make sure the individual is on the cheapest energy and water tariffs, and that they had access to everything they need to live comfortably at home after a long spell in hospital.

Home & Well

Come and speak to your local Citizens Advice worker here in the hospital and make sure you have all the help you need to be home and well.

- Advice on energy bills
- Advice on water bills
- Priority Service Register
- Financial Advice

Helping customers save water

We rely on water every day. Yet, we have less to go around than ever before.

So, we must all reduce how much we use. We're helping customers reduce water and save money on their bills with helpful tips and ideas on our [website](https://www.southernwater.co.uk) ([southernwater.co.uk](https://www.southernwater.co.uk)).

Customers can also book a free water saving home visit to discover how their household could use less and save money. We have also been out and about talking to local communities about water saving, how to book a free home saver visit, how to save money on bills and advice on preventing sewer blockages at home.

Working together to create a special green space

We're working with the community to make a green space at our pump field in Seaford into a great wildlife habitat, where people can spend time with nature.

Committee members from the Cliff Gardens Project – part of the Seaford Community Partnership – worked together with volunteers from Southern Water and Cappagh Brown to create a whole new area for education and wildlife to thrive, help biodiversity and improve the environment.

The volunteers were joined for hedge planting by eight school children from Seaford Head school's Eco Club, who plan to return to the site in the spring with eco tests and a testing kit, showing how such a space can help with learning. And in the future, local schools will be able to use this green space for outdoor learning, giving them an opportunity to study the plant life, as well as supporting their school-based subjects such as science and geography.



Community Ambassadors

Our amazing Community Ambassadors engage, discuss and listen to people in shopping centres, beach fronts, parks, festivals, parades and community events all across our region.

They go to schools, colleges and community centres to talk about the 3Ps (paper, pee, poo), explain how clean wholesome water comes out of the tap and promote messages on responsible water habits and affordability schemes.



Wallands Primary School raingarden

Our second raingarden has been completed in East Sussex with our partners at TAP - the Aquifer Partnership.

“The development of the rainscape at Wallands has completely transformed our playground and the way children play in it. Our children are excited to see where the rain water collects and it generates lots of discussions about recycling water!

“The further development of the planted areas have really inspired the children and our Green Team have thoroughly enjoyed being involved in the various stages, from design to completion. Our parents have been amazed by the transformation too and have commented on how inviting the area looks now. We can't wait to see how all the plants grow!” Julie Mortimer, SENCo.

Thanks to an innovative new £1.6 million project, jointly funded by Southern Water and the Department for Education, more schools across our region will benefit from Sustainable Drainage Systems or SuDS which will include a mixture of rain harvesting, rain gardens and rain planters.



“This was such a fantastic informative assembly, very well received and excited our geography teacher!”

Our education programme

Educating people of all ages is so important to bring about the behaviour change that is needed to protect our precious water source. Our school speakers deliver engaging and enlightening talks in primary and secondary schools about the water systems and the challenges that we face to future proof our supply, and care for our environment.

The majority of our talks are delivered in primary schools for KS2 children, linking to curriculum learning. We also speak to community groups for young people as well as older generations who enjoy our visits, explaining the water cycle, ways to save water and money on their bill; across our region.

We have received some wonderful feedback following our talks:

“This was such a fantastic informative assembly, very well received and excited our geography teacher!”

“The session was interactive and really demonstrated how water is transported and the financial implications of this. The children were engaged due to the practical nature of the session; there was a good balance of listening and doing. Thank you so much to Southern Water.”

So far in 2022–23 we have engaged with 21,824 people through 58 events across our region with a number of return visits!

Want to know more? Check out our website and booking form [online](https://www.southernwater.co.uk) (southernwater.co.uk).

Community Centre Energy Grant – first winners announced

Southern Water has awarded Community Energy Grants across the region to support community centres energy bills to ensure they can support those in need this winter.

Since the scheme was launched in October, we have been inundated with applications for support with energy bills from community centres and spaces including social pantries, homeless drop-in spaces and arts centres – which provide a home to a wide range of events, support groups, classes, winter warmer spaces and befriender clubs.

Alongside the grant, the hubs will receive support from Southern Water's community, affordability and vulnerability teams, who deliver talks and advice on topics such as saving money on bills and we delivered 5 community centre free Christmas lunches for local residents.

One centre will also be selected to receive a comprehensive water audit of their building and advice about how to reduce their water costs in Spring 2023.

“What wonderful news, we're opening the centre as a warm space and with the huge rise in energy prices, the money will really support us through the winter months”
Gill, Golf Road Community Centre, North Deal

The Community Energy Grant is delivered in partnership with our valued delivery partner CMDP (Costain, MWH Treatment) and is open to independently run community centres and spaces where activities such as local foodbanks, support groups and children's programmes operate.

Four grants, each with a total of £1,000, are being awarded in each of our five counties – offering a total of £20,000 funding.

This support will go towards energy costs, helping relieve the pressure that community spaces face staying open during winter months.

Each organisation will get £1,000 to be used towards their energy bills. In addition to this financial help, we'll hold information talks about our affordability schemes to their interest groups, and one centre will be selected to receive a water audit of their building and advice about how to reduce their water bill in Spring 2023.



Volunteering

Our employees are supported to give back two days from their usual working pattern to their local community.

This popular scheme amongst employees has seen us deliver 2,125 volunteer hours during 2022 supporting 47 different charities and causes. During November over 100 volunteers directed their energies to support local charities Turning Tides who were converting a local bible college into supported accommodation and service centres for those commencing their pathway out of homelessness. The tasks at hand were vast and varied with over 50 rooms to paint and outdoor spaces to clear. The project was further supported by our delivery partners working on the Horsham Treatment works development nearby.

Community Grant – Supporting young people in our region

As part of Southern Water’s ongoing activities to support communities we have awarded five £10,000 grants to regional charities working to support improved outcomes for young people. Under Level 1 of our Community Grants Scheme, we invited applications from regional registered charity partners working to help improve outcomes for young people.

Five partners were chosen – one from each of our operational regional areas (Kent, East Sussex, West Sussex, Hampshire, and IOW). The award for each partner will be a £10,000 donation alongside support through employee volunteering, expertise sharing and partnership opportunities over an 18 month-long partnership.

The charities that have been awarded the community grant are:

East Sussex – Community Supporters:

An environmentally focused charity based in Hastings that aims to improve nature whilst also improving residents lives and life opportunities. This is achieved through engagement activities, training, and enabling access for all. Nature-based activities are used to support and improve outcomes around mental or physical health, isolation, poverty, and at need groups. This includes a Women’s support group using the benefits of nature to improve their mental health and an Eco Hub to host social activity groups.

Hampshire – No Limits:

No Limits provides support to approximately 7,000 children and young people (under 26) in Southampton

and Hampshire each year. The charity offers a universal, open access drop-in service at their Advice Centre and through weekly Health and Wellbeing drop-ins in schools/colleges. Their non-judgemental approach enables them to meet the needs of the most deprived, vulnerable and isolated young people who often don’t access mainstream services.

Isle of Wight – Waterside Community Trust:

The trust provides recreational and leisure facilities for the residents of Ryde and its surrounding area. The charity aims to be of benefit to all members of society whatever their age, infirmity, disablement, social or economic circumstances as well as the public at large in the interest of social welfare and the improvement of life for the local population.

The charity plays an essential role in drowning prevention across the Island with the formation of Ryde Beach Lifeguards, a beach safety service operating in Ryde and Sandown during the summer months, as well as delivering essential drowning prevention initiatives including Safe Safe, Rookie Lifesaving, School Talks, Community CPR Training, professional lifesaving training and much more.

Kent – Dover Smart Project:

Dover Smart Project is a local charity that is transforming lives through art and creativity. The charity provides creative opportunities for vulnerable and disadvantaged people, mainly Young Carers, to take part in a wide range of activities and experiences.

The project runs weekly support groups and community-based projects to help boost their confidence, enhance their well-being, raise their aspirations, and widen their outlook on the world.

West Sussex – AudioActive:

AudioActive is a regional charity that uses the power of music as an authentic engagement tool and a catalyst for change in young lives. Through mentoring and regular engagement, they help young people aged 11-25 to address the difficult personal and social issues affecting their lives, whilst helping them develop as musicians and artists. Their vision is for better futures through and for music, enabling young people and emerging artists of all backgrounds to fulfil their potential.

Southern Water’s Community Partnerships and Programme Manager, Alex Willumsen said:

“Our on-going Community Grant programme recognises the importance of providing support for young people in our region and the ripple effect that may have for communities. Through new partnerships over the following 18 months, we hope to support and learn alongside our charity partners and support the incredible work they do with this age group.”