



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, 'community members' or 'community' 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 community members on a monthly basis and the Accountability Sessions provide an opportunity for the community members 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 community members are empowered to raise concerns, ask questions and challenge water companies on areas of perceived poor performance and issues of interest. Community members will be supported by insights obtained from the consumer panels' research and significant events that are relevant to their service provider.

Community members 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 a review of the Spring action plan and company service performance.
- The Spring sessions will consider how far companies have met their action plans coming out of the autumn session. Within this, community members will also be able to raise additional areas of concern with their company.

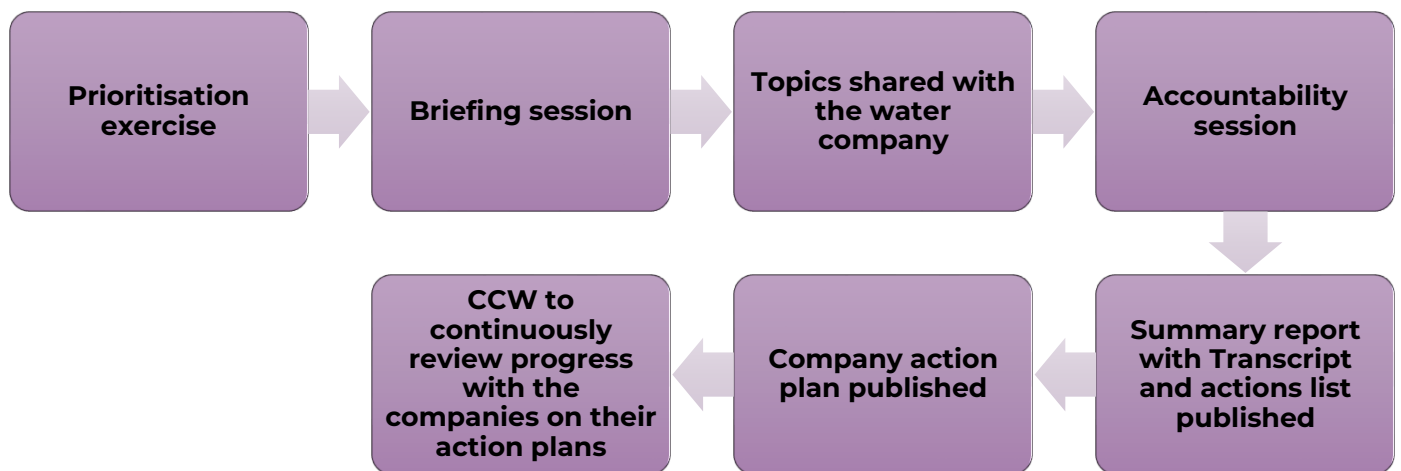
In addition, should community members wish to raise issues with companies at other times during the year, ad-hoc Accountability Sessions may be held, for example following a significant service failure.

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 community members.
4. Focus on issues that have a material impact on the consumer experience, such as bill levels, communication, 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 summary and transcript reports and action plan report published online.
7. Be chaired by a member of the CCW Board.

2.2 Accountability Session process



The planning and running of each session will be led by the community members' 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 two senior representatives of the undertaker attend the meeting, which is expected to include the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). 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 community members 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 community members 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 community members.
- Support CCW's Board Chair in managing the session structure, timekeeping and moderation of community members 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 community 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 summary and transcript reports, and high-quality action plan reports following each session in line with CCW's publication deadlines¹
- Evaluate session effectiveness by capturing community members 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.

¹ The summary and transcript report will be published on working day 7, the action plan report on working day 28 after the Accountability Session.

5. Community Members

Water Voice community 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. Community 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. Community 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. Community members will complete a simple virtual onboarding and registration process to confirm their place, including downloading the Water Voice community app and signing up to the Water Voice online community.
3. At the start of each month, Taylor McKenzie will send community members two surveys; 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 and a '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, community members will be asked to join an interactive, Facebook-like, online space where they can engage with other community members and take part in discussions focused on their local water company. Each week, community 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 community 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. Community members 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, community 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 community member is an important commitment. Community members will help shape how water companies listen and act on customer views over a 12-month period. Consumers recruited as community members will be expected to stay engaged and participate regularly throughout the year.

5.2. Overview of community members' tasks



6. Attendees

The members of the Accountability Sessions will include:

- Community members
- CCW Board member (Chair)
- Taylor Mckenzie Research
- Key water company representatives, preferably 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 community members' 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, community members 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 Barometer² and Spotlight surveys.³

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

Community members 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, community members will be briefed on the Code of Conduct and key themes considered for the Accountability Session.

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

² 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.

³ 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.

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

8. Accountability Sessions

8.1. Arranging the sessions

CCW will liaise with Taylor McKenzie Research to agree the time and date of each Accountability Session. Taylor McKenzie Research will send invites to the community members. CCW will send invites to the water companies and other stakeholders. The themes for each session will be circulated at least one week in advance to each water company representative by CCW.

8.2. Technology

Each Accountability Session will be held as a virtual meeting. Ad hoc Accountability Sessions may be held in person if required.

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.

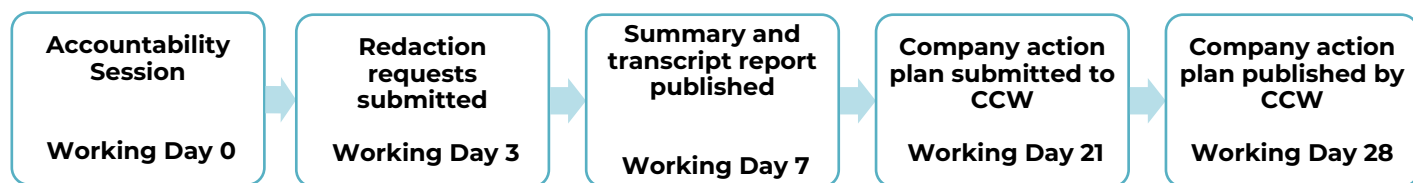
8.3. Reporting

CCW will publish a summary and transcript report after each Accountability Session within 7 working days and publish an action plan with water company responses within 28 working days.

The transcript will be a true record of what was said but will not name individual community members. All attendees must be mindful of this. Community members 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. On a monthly basis progress will be shared with the community members and with other relevant stakeholders as appropriate.



9. Action plans

Companies should share a draft action plan with the CCW panels' team within 21 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 community 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 community member 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 community members 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 community members 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. When an ad hoc Accountability Session trigger has been met, this needs to be approved by CCW and then put to a community member vote, Taylor McKenzie will reach out to all community members giving the reason for the ad hoc Accountability Session and allow community members 3 days to vote on if they think an ad hoc session is required. If at least 25 community members vote to hold an ad hoc session, then this will be taken forward and arrangements made to set up this ad hoc Accountability Session within 4 weeks of the vote.

CCW and Taylor McKenzie Research will agree dates and Taylor McKenzie Research make arrangements with the community members whilst CCW will make arrangements with water companies and other key stakeholders.

11. Appendix

11.1 Action plan template

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.				
Action #	Date Raised	Description of the action	Category	Company Response	Specific actions (done or doing)	Additional Narrative if required	Deadline	Outcome	Date closed
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.	- CCW will publish a summary and transcript report of the Accountability Sessions within 7 working days of the session. - Water companies will provide their action plans/responses within 21 working days of the Accountability Sessions. - CCW will publish company action plans on day 28.
2	Empower community members to influence water company plans	After the Accountability Sessions at least 80% of community members should report that:

through active engagement and regular dialogue.

- 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 community 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.
- All company actions will be followed up on a monthly basis and outcomes shared with community members

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 community members 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 community members, observers will be in a different 'virtual' room with no access to the main Accountability Session discussion. 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 twice a year after every Accountability Session 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
1.2	23/06/26	Redacted	Consumer Panels Manager	Published version	Changes following Spring 26 sessions



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