



Measuring Customer Service

One important component of Scottish Water's performance is the level of Customer Service that customers experience. We use two measures to assess Scottish Water's performance in delivering better customer service: the OPA and the hCEM.

This summary provides more information on this process.



Introduction

We have a statutory duty to promote the interests of customers. As part of completing this duty we monitor the level of service that Scottish Water provides to its customers through the use of two systems; the OPA and the hCEM. The hCEM was first introduced in the 2015-2021 strategic review.

The OPA

The 'Overall Performance Assessment' (OPA) was originally developed by Ofwat to compare customer service performances of companies in England and Wales by scoring performance across a range of activities that affect customer service. By using the same points system as England and Wales we were able to compare Scottish Water's performance against that of the companies south of the border.

Ofwat recently retired the OPA framework, however we consider that there are still significant benefits from using it in Scotland. The OPA is a reliable way to assess Scottish Water's improvements in customer service and, as such, it is an important element of our monitoring of Scottish Water's delivery of the regulatory contract.

The service areas we assess

We calculate the OPA by weighting 17 individual performance measures¹ that can be broken down into four categories:

- water supply levels of service;
- sewerage levels of service;
- customer service; and
- environmental performance.

These are the same four categories that Ofwat previously used to assess performance in England and Wales.

¹ Some performance measures include more than one aspect of service.



How the OPA works

To calculate the OPA score, we convert Scottish Water's performance in each service area to a score out of 50 points; the better the performance, the higher the score. For each measure we define the maximum and minimum performance, based historical performance for the measure in 1997-98². If performance in the current year is better than the best achieved previously, it will receive a score of 50 points. Performance below the worst recorded previously receives a score of 5 points.

Once all of the individual customer service measures have been converted to scores out of 50, they are weighted according to the importance of each measure to customers. For comparability, we use the same weightings that Ofwat developed. These weightings were assessed based on market research in England and Wales³. Further research⁴ showed that customer preferences in Scotland were similar to those in England and Wales.

Monitoring customer service using the OPA

The OPA milestones which we set at the Strategic Review of Charges form an important part of the regulatory contract that Scottish Water must deliver during the period. We therefore monitor performance in this regard very closely.

Each autumn we publish a report that comments on Scottish Water's delivery of the OPA milestones⁵. We believe that stakeholders welcome the increased transparency that the combination of clear targets and regular monitoring brings.

² Except sewer flooding where ranges are set from performance over 1997-98 to 2002-03, and low pressure where ranges are set from performance in 2002-03.

³ Surveys carried out by MORI in 1992 and 2002.

⁴ The Water Customer Consultation Panels in 2003 and MORI in 2005.

⁵ See 'Scottish Water's Performance 2012-13' November 2013



The hCEM

The 'Household Customer Experience Measure' (hCEM) is a performance measure that was developed by Scottish Water and the Customer Forum (an independent body that was set up to represent customer's views) to quantify the success of Scottish Water's interactions with its customers. The hCEM was designed specifically to meet the unique needs of Scottish Water and its customers. Importantly, it was the first performance measure to include the views of customers who experience an issue with their service but do not make direct contact with Scottish Water to complain.

How the hCEM works

The hCEM score is split evenly between quantitative and qualitative components. The quantitative component is scored based on the contact between Scottish Water and its customers. Points are scored or lost based on a number of areas, including the number of customer issue contacts (including those received via social media) and the number of times that Scottish Water's phone lines are busy and calls are abandoned. The qualitative component is based on customer experience surveys. This includes surveys of customers who have had their service affected by Scottish Water's work, but have not actively made contact with Scottish Water.

The nhhCEM

The 'non-Household Customer Experience Measure' (nhhCEM) was developed to help ensure that there is greater focus on delivering service improvements to non-household customers in Scotland. It works much like the hCEM.

How the nhhCEM works

The purpose of the nhhCEM is to inform and drive improvements in all non-household customers' service experiences, both with regards to the service they receive and how Scottish Water resolve any issues with services. As with the hCEM there are two main components of the measure – qualitative and quantitative. The quantitative component is scored in a very similar way to the hCEM, while the qualitative component measures and drives improvements against core services that all customers in the non-household sector receive. This is made up of separate surveys measuring the experience of Licensed Providers, developers and business users.



Appendix 1: Summary of OPA components

Water supply levels of service

Inadequate pressure: the assessment used for this measure of service is the percentage of connected properties at risk of receiving pressure below the reference level. At the reference level pressure, a 9-litre bucket should be filled within one minute.

Unplanned supply interruptions: the number of properties experiencing unplanned supply interruptions in excess of 6, 12 and 24 hours. Interruptions lasting longer than 24 hours are given a double weighting.

Hosepipe restrictions: the average proportion of person-weeks of hosepipe restrictions imposed over the most recent five-year period. Restrictions for each of the five years are weighted, to give more significance to recent years.

Drinking water quality: the percentage of compliant samples (i.e. the percentage of water samples that met the required level of quality).⁶

Security of supply index: an assessment of water resource availability.

Sewerage levels of service

Sewer flooding (overloaded sewers): the percentage of properties connected that have been affected by an incident of internal sewage flooding caused by the overload of a sewer (excluding incidents caused by severe weather).

Sewer flooding (other causes): the percentage of all properties connected to a company's sewer network which have been affected by an incident of internal sewage flooding caused by equipment failure or sewer blockage or collapse.

⁶ Compliance is monitored by the Drinking Water Quality Regulator



Customer service

Company contact: a measure based on two equally weighted aspects of the contact with customers:

- Percentage of written complaints that are answered within ten working days; and
- Percentage of calls received that are answered within 30 seconds.
- Assessed customer service: a measure based on seven equally weighted aspects of the quality of customer service:
 - Revenue and debt collection;
 - Complaint handling;
 - Information to customers;
 - Telephone contact hours;
 - Compensation policy;
 - Supply pipe repair policy; and
 - Service for disabled and elderly customers.

Environmental performance

Sewage treatment works compliance: the percentage population equivalent served by sewage treatment works that do not comply with their discharge consents.

Sewage sludge disposal: the percentage of total sewage sludge that is disposed of in an unsatisfactory manner.

Leakage: an assessment of progress towards the level of leakage considered to be economically viable, termed the economic level of leakage. It is calculated on three years' worth of performance information and the company's score is based on six performance bands.



Water pollution incidents (Category 1&2)⁷: an assessment of the number of category 1 and 2 pollution incidents resulting from water treatment and distribution activities. It is calculated as the total number of incidents per million winter population served.

Wastewater pollution incidents (Category 1&2)⁷: an assessment of the number of category 1 and 2 pollution incidents resulting from sewage collection and treatment activities. It is calculated as the total number of incidents per million population equivalent served.

Wastewater pollution incidents (Category 3)⁷: an assessment of the number of category 3 pollution incidents resulting from sewage collection and treatment activities. It is calculated as the total number of incidents per million population equivalent served.

⁷ The categories are defined by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, and reflect the severity of the pollution incident.

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