



Hardship Fund Support

from Southern Water

“Enhancing Customer Resilience and support”

Background Rationale



- **Rising living costs** - have placed extra pressure on vulnerable households. As a business Southern Water recognized that some customers, even those above the threshold for its current support tariffs, may still struggle to afford essentials.
- To combat this Southern Water's **Hardship Fund** was created as part of its wider affordability and vulnerability strategy.
- The aim is to provide **targeted, relief and assistance** for those in crisis or impacted by exceptional circumstances

Hardship Fund “Why It Matters”

“compliments existing schemes and tariffs like essentials and newstart”

“Promotes water affordability and payment sustainability for customers”

“Aligns with our social responsibility and vulnerability strategy”

“Aims to reduce arrears and improve the lives of our customers”



Current Support “Help when It Matters”



- **Homeless to Home** - to support Southern Water customer's who have recently experienced homelessness
- **White goods Support** – to provide eligible customers access to essential white goods or furniture
- **Crisis Food Voucher** – provides individuals or families access to essential groceries during times of financial hardship or crisis
- **Water Debt Grant** - provides support to customers paying or re-engaging that are struggling with high value water debts
- **Domestic Abuse Support** – provides access to support for arrears accrued as the result of abuse
- **12 Month Bill Reduction** - provides a bill reduction to individuals who are on a higher income and have been impacted by a change of circumstances
- **Payment break** – access to a financial break where customer can seek independent financial advice



What's included:

Homeless to home support: Grant of up to £1,000

Support Includes: Fridge freezer or washing machine, Bed and Mattress, Air Fryer, duvet, pillows, basic dining plate set, and basic cookware.

White goods Support - Grant for 1 item up to the Value of £1,000

Support Included: Fridge freezer, washing machine, cookers, beds, and potentially carpet and the cost of ordering, installing, and removal of the existing appliance where applicable.

Crisis Food Voucher Support - Grant Value: £200 Food Voucher or a £20 instant voucher

can be provided if engaging with our vulnerability liaison officers in the community

Impact: Addresses short-term food insecurity and looks to improve the lives of our customers

Eligibility Criteria:



Homeless to home support

Be a Current southern water bill payer,
Previously impacted by homelessness
Have no previous arrears,
Have a current payment arrangement in place
Be on a low income receive current support via the Essentials or WaterSure tariff,
Be referred by or Working with support services, (**self referrals can be made online**)
Be able to provide information about their income and personal circumstances as part of the process.

White goods Support

Be a Current southern water bill payer,
Have no previous arrears,
Have a current payment arrangement in place
Be on a low income receive current support via the Essentials or WaterSure tariff,
Be referred by or Working with support services, (**self referrals can be made online**)
Be able to provide information about their income and personal circumstances as part of the process.

Crisis Food Voucher Support

Be a Current southern water bill payer,
Have no previous arrears,
Have a current payment arrangement in place
Be on a low income receive current support via the Essentials or WaterSure tariff,
Be referred by or Working with support services, (**self referrals can be made online**)
Be able to provide information about their income and personal circumstances as part of the process.

Water Debt Write off Grant

Purpose: Is to provide financial relief to individuals who are struggling with large Water bill debt

Outcome: a grant up to £3,000 can be awarded to clear water debt where eligibility is met

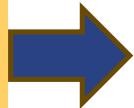
Eligibility: Have Water debt of over £500, have in place or have set up a repayment plan to cover or nearly cover ongoing usage

Eligibility been impacted by: bereavement, illness, drop in income or another extenuating circumstance



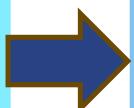
Further Support

50% Bill reduction for 12 months: customers can apply for a reduced bill for a period of 12 months where the eligibility criteria is met



Eligibility: The household income needs to be greater than £22,020 and outgoings exceed income due to bereavement, main earner's loss of employment, sudden additional caring responsibilities etc

3 Month Payment Break: Customers can apply for a 3-month payment break directly with us if they are struggling financially and have support from a money advice service



Eligibility: The household has been impacted financially by an exceptional circumstance such as bereavement, loss of earnings, sudden additional caring responsibilities health deterioration etc



Domestic Abuse Support

As an organisation we are committed to providing the maximum support for customers in these circumstances with compassion and confidentiality

If eligible a Debt write off for arrears accrued during the DA period will be applied to the account inline with our Domestic Abuse Policy

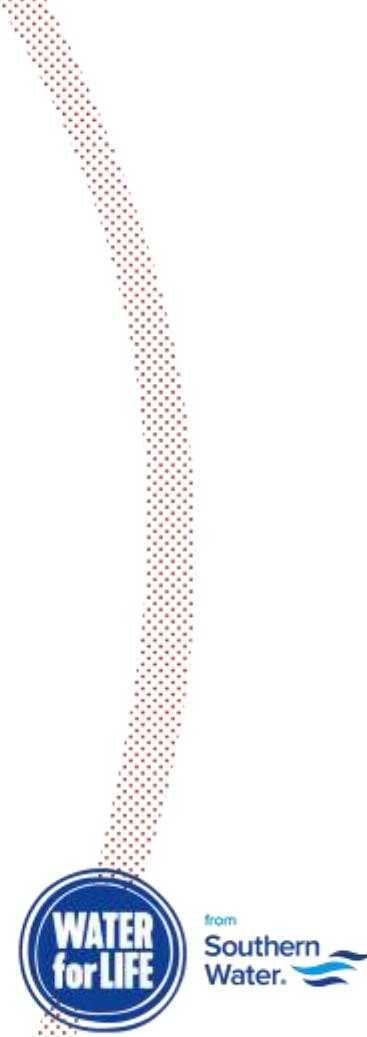
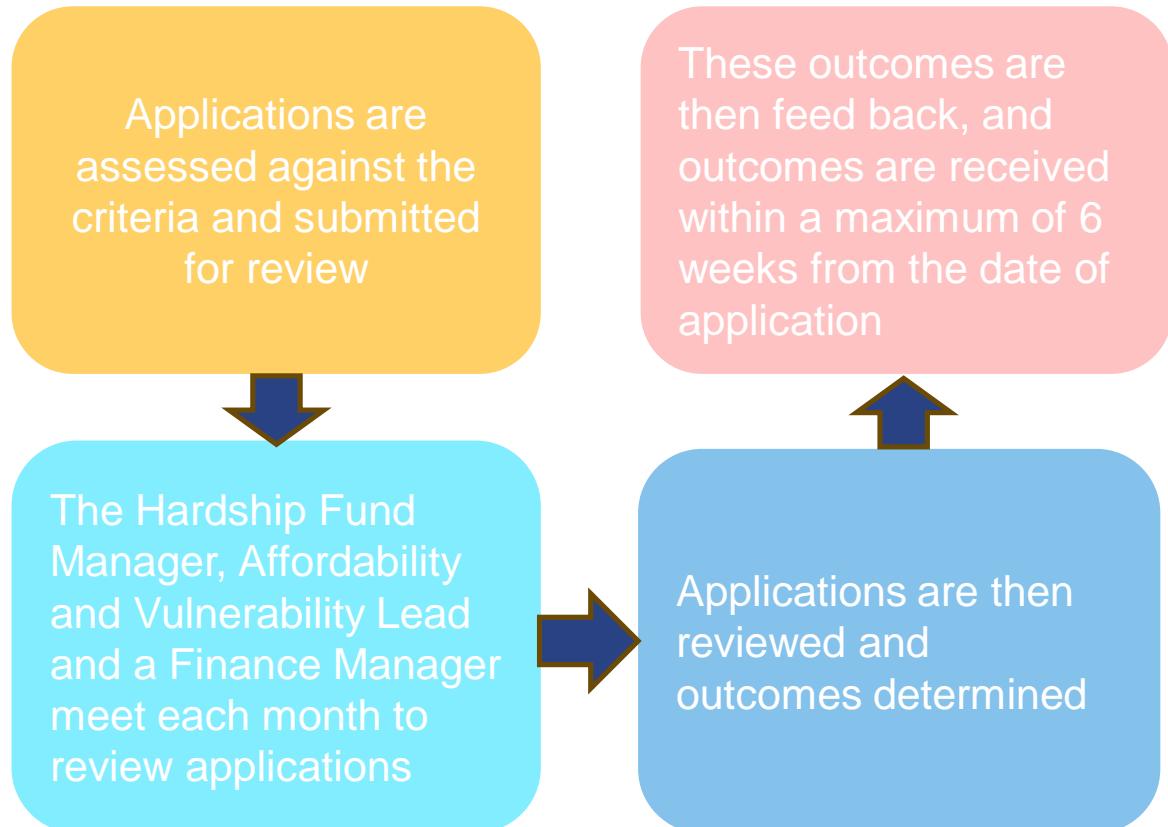
No evidence of abuse is requested
Income is not part of the assessment criteria
There is no need to be on a specific tariff

We focus on: Timelines of the events, **Third-party involvement** (if any), and require a clear understanding of the customer's circumstances



Application Process

“When will I know”



Successes to date

449 Customers have received support through our Hardship fund since Jan 2025

158 Customers have benefitted from a debt write off grant since Apr 2025

£2800 Worth of food voucher support provided across our region since 2025

163 Customers benefitted from either a white goods grant or homeless to home support since Apr 2025

Customer Feedback:

'Before this I was using a tiny camping fridge, now I can go food shopping. It has made cooking for my daughter so much easier, and it is saving me a lot of money as I can buy more stuff in bulk and keep it fresh rather than having to go out and buy stuff everyday.'

"I have more freezer space so I can freeze any food I don't use, so I save on waste and money.'



How to contact us

- Any staff referrals can contact the affordability team on the Free-phone number 0800 027 0800, or you can email them on: hereTohelp@southernwater.co.uk
- Or contact can be made to our Vulnerability Liaison Officer for Hampshire lee.Hutchinson@southernwater.co.uk
- Applications can be made online for our schemes and tariffs at [What If I Can't Pay My Bill? - Southern Water](#)
- Applications can be made for our Priority Services Register at [Priority Services Register - Southern Water](#)
- Applications can be made for our hardship fund at: [Hardship Fund - Southern Water](#)
- If you are unsure which water company supplies, you then use the link below
- <https://www.water.org.uk/advice-for-customers/find-your-supplier/>

