

A visually impaired & severely disabled customer called to give comments on the vulnerable customer consultation.

The main takeaways are: moving towards digital cannot be inclusive & options such as discounts for e-billing exclude disabled and visually impaired populations

- Reaching the customer via visual means (elbowing out the blind)
- Not sending bills at all to blind customers/disabled customers
- Blind customers use cash to pay bills
- Water metered customers and bills: meters are easy to read but digital readings excludes blind customers
- Digitalisation of the entire system, how will that work?
- Failing of digitalisation, local authorities, benefits, doctors surgeries excluding those who are blind
- No way that we can be inclusive
- Providing disinformation – if people don't have their bills
- Telephone number for people who are blind needs to be truly accessible as they don't have the options that those who aren't blind have e.g. to email or text
- Section 149 equalities act needs to be considered in the design of any public facing systems or interfaces
- Market active (can't skip across water companies), law says that disabled customers are put on the lowest possible price possible
- Discounts to those with e-billing
- Automatically put on a tariff from signing up with local authorities (help with social care), not just in water industry but across all utilities
- E.g. discounts to those with e-billing is something that excludes
- Companies should be asking whether customers are disabled instead of expecting customers to opt in
- Opt in: can't opt in if you're blind (and it is only doable via website or visual means etc)
- Useful inclusion (phrase coined by customer) through social care databases (these are already checked to ensure that people fall into these categories, there's assurance)