



WATER COMPANIES TRANSFORMING LIVES

A Social Return on Investment study to measure the impact of water company trusts and assistance schemes

Social Return on Investment

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Water companies deliver a wide range of services to support vulnerable customers who are struggling to pay their water bill. Customers who are in financial hardship and have difficulty with bills should contact their water provider first so that they can discuss what help and solutions they can provide.

Severn Trent, Thames Water and United Utilities recognises that many vulnerable customers may need more attention, so they each established and fund independent charitable trusts to enable vulnerable individuals to access extra assistance. Their three charitable trusts are free from company control and are not performance-managed by water companies. As self-standing, self-governing charities, the water company trust funds are free to determine their own schemes and funding priorities.

The trust funds operate schemes that provide grants to customers who are struggling to meet their water bill payments, as well as further assistance payments to cover the costs of essential household goods and fees for bankruptcy and Debt Relief Orders (DROs). Three schemes operated by the trusts also award organisational grants, primarily to fund local partner agencies to deliver debt advice services.

Auriga Services is the independent not-for-profit company that manages and administrates the three water companies' trusts and a customer assistance scheme. In partnership with the trustees of each trust fund, in 2016 Auriga commissioned Ecorys to undertake a Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis to quantify the social value created by the collective investment in the schemes, in providing grants and assistance to vulnerable customers in Great Britain.

The study involved:

- Desk research of relevant literature and scheme data for 2015/16
- An online survey completed by 314 beneficiaries
- In-depth consultations with 10 individual beneficiaries, nine beneficiary organisations, and six staff involved in administering the schemes.

Social Return on Investment Summary

In summary:

- Total benefits from the schemes in 2015/16 are estimated to be £47,317,234, or £56,661,105 if including £9,343,871 of debt written off following Further Assistance Payments that paid fees to instigate bankruptcy or Debt Relief Orders proceedings¹
- Total direct costs of the schemes (including both administration and the grants made) in 2015/16 are estimated to be £15,439,818.²

¹ In keeping with the principle of taking a conservative approach, the benefits of the schemes are estimated to last for one year.

² This does not include indirect costs, which could not be quantified but are likely to be small relative to direct costs.

Therefore:

- The added value (difference between costs and benefits) of the schemes in 2015/16 is estimated to be £31,877,416, or £41,221,287 if debt written off following bankruptcy or Debt Relief Orders proceedings was included
- The SROI ratio, or ratio of benefits to costs, is estimated to be 3.06. This means that, for every £1 invested into the schemes, £3.06 of benefits is estimated to be generated. If debt written off following bankruptcy or Debt Relief Orders proceedings was included, the SROI ratio rises to 3.67.

Demographics

- The majority of the 13,656 grant beneficiaries were aged 45 or older
- Just over half of beneficiaries (55%) rented their home from a housing association
- 80% of successful applications recorded only one adult in the household
- Most beneficiaries (61%) had no children
- 17% of households supported included a disabled person
- 83% of beneficiaries were White British
- The geographical distribution of beneficiaries was dominated by large, urban conurbations.

Beneficiaries' Prior Circumstances and Experiences of Support

The cumulative total of debt was £10,956,020. This equates to an average of £802 per beneficiary, or £920 if only including those with pre-existing water debt.

The online survey revealed that concerns about money had affected the mental health, physical health, relationships with family or partner and job or employment status of over half of beneficiaries for each outcome. Mental and physical health were thought to be particularly affected: 82% and 73% of respondents said that their mental and physical health had been affected by their money concerns respectively. Comments suggested that the relationship between health and debt worked both ways, with health problems also leading to debt issues, often brought on following significant life events.

Feedback on the application process and support provided to individuals was generally positive. For most people, the support that they received went beyond their expectations of the service. A number of beneficiaries have recommended the scheme that supported them to friends, family or others within their community.

The main outcomes from the support, as defined in the survey, related to finances and financial capability, health, housing, relationships, employment and employability. There were also a number of other outcomes reported: for example, paying for bankruptcy or Debt Relief Orders proceedings, or being able to eat more healthily when a fridge/freezer was provided to them.

After assigning a monetary value to these outcomes, and adjusting for considerations around attribution, deadweight and how much of people's total debt that the water and Further Assistance Payments helped to alleviate, total benefits from the schemes are estimated to be £47,317,234 in 2015/16, or £56,661,105 if debt written off following bankruptcy or Debt Relief Orders proceedings was included. This comprises:

- £312,192 as a result of financial outcomes
- £34,761,352 as a result of health outcomes
- £7,213,286 as a result of housing outcomes
- £2,086,957 as a result of relationships outcomes
- £2,910,173 as a result of employment outcomes
- £33,273 as a result of other outcomes (healthy eating)
- £9,343,871 of debt written off following bankruptcy or Debt Relief Orders proceedings.

A number of individual beneficiaries also commented via the survey or in-depth consultations that their involvement with the scheme had “transformed” their view of their water company and/or water companies in general.

Organisational Beneficiaries

In addition, since 2009/10, three of the funds have awarded grants to 112 projects with a combined value of £5,862,438.

The grants averaged £40,996, the vast majority of which were to provide debt advice and/or awareness services. Monitoring data suggests that these services reached 53,773 individuals, supporting 170 staff and 484 volunteers. Paid staff provided 3,797 hours of work in total each week: equivalent to over 506 working days.

As a result of the support, 6,061 applications for funding were completed and 7,965 payment plans were set up. In addition, over three-quarters (76%) of those who had previously reported being unable to meet their water charges were subsequently able to do so.

The support received could potentially contribute to a range of positive outcomes, although in keeping with the principle of taking a conservative approach we have not attempted to explicitly value the benefits of organisational grants. This is because of limitations in the available monitoring data, also that benefits to organisations can be spread over a number of financial years and the risk of overlap between those who received advice and individual grant recipients.

Conclusions

The impact of assistance for vulnerable customers is clearly substantial. The trust fund schemes evaluated produced a number of outcomes for individuals, including improvements to their financial situation, health, housing, relationships and employment.

This research has important policy implications, especially at a period that is marked by cuts to charitable services. Through funding these schemes, the intervention and preventative work to stop debt getting out of control could make significant savings for the government, and this should be considered when allocating funding and protecting services.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In 2016, in partnership with the trustees of each trust fund, Auriga Services commissioned Ecorys to undertake a Social Return on Investment (SROI) study into the impact of four water company trusts and assistance schemes on its beneficiaries and wider society. The schemes considered by the study are:

- Severn Trent Charitable Trust Fund
- United Utilities Charitable Trust Fund
- Thames Water Charitable Trust Fund
- Thames Water Limited Customer Assistance Fund.

The four schemes respond to the distinct needs and requirements of their customers by providing grants to individuals or families struggling to meet their water bill payments. They also offer Further Assistance Payments to cover essential household goods and fees for bankruptcy and Debt Relief Orders if trustees believe this will have a significant impact. In addition, the three trust funds offer grants to organisations providing debt support and money advice. The costs of the schemes (including both administration and the grants made) are supported by contributions from Severn Trent, United Utilities and Thames Water.³

An overview of Auriga Services is provided in Annex One.

1.2 Research Overview

1.2.1 Ecorys

Ecorys UK is a research-based consultancy. Since 1982, we have helped numerous clients in the public, private and third sector to understand and meet their challenges. We help our clients to make and implement informed decisions leading to a positive impact on society through the work that we do. Our services focus on six key areas:

- Policy and research
- Programme management
- Communications
- Digital, design and information technology
- Foreign direct investment
- International development.

³ For further information on the schemes, please visit their websites: www.sttf.org.uk, www.uutf.org.uk and www.twtf.org.uk.

1.2.2 Study methodology

The methodology used for the study involved the following tasks:

- Desk research of relevant literature and analysis of scheme data relating to the costs and the beneficiaries of the schemes (both individuals⁴ and organisations)
- An online survey of individual beneficiaries (see Section 3.1 of this report for further information)
- In-depth consultations with 10 individual beneficiaries, nine beneficiary organisations, and six staff involved in administering the schemes
- Production of maps to illustrate the recorded postcodes of individual beneficiaries.

The aim of the study was to undertake an SROI analysis for each of the schemes (which are presented in separate reports), in addition to an overall assessment. This has involved considering the costs associated with delivery of the schemes, as well as attempting to quantify and monetise the social and economic outcomes resulting from the provision of assistance to individuals and grants to organisations, including the related debt advice and income maximisation services.

The analysis has considered issues such as attribution, deadweight and drop-off to estimate the proportion of the outcomes that are a consequence of the work of the schemes.

The schemes have been operating for varying periods of time. In order to minimise recall issues and difficulties in making contact with beneficiaries, the research has focused on those who have benefited from the relevant scheme in the financial year preceding this analysis (April 2015 to March 2016), as well as data on the costs associated with delivery of the schemes for the same period. There is, however, some reference in this report to historic monitoring data to provide context; where this is the case, this is clearly stated.

1.2.3 Social Return on Investment (SROI)

SROI is a methodology that is now widely recognised in the field of economic evaluation. SROI is a form of cost benefit analysis that aims to identify the impact of an intervention on the key stakeholders (including the direct beneficiaries). Impact is measured by the change in outcomes associated with the intervention, adjusted for considerations such as attribution (to what extent the outcomes could be said to occur as a result of the scheme, as opposed to other interventions), deadweight (what would have happened anyway) and drop-off (the length of time for which these changes persist). The outcomes are then valued through the use of appropriate financial proxies.

SROI is distinct from cost benefit analysis in that it was developed from social accounting and is guided by seven principles across six stages, which are presented in Table 1.1. To avoid over-claiming, the principles err on the side of caution, and emphasise transparency and consulting with stakeholders as a key component of an effective SROI.

The SROI analysis results in a ratio, which presents the impact (benefit) as a monetary value against every £1, invested (cost). A SROI of £1:£1 represents cost neutrality; a ratio above that indicates a net benefit and below that represents a net cost. It is therefore essential that the study accurately and robustly estimates the costs and benefits associated with each scheme in order to undertake the SROI analysis.

⁴ "Individual beneficiary" refers to a successful applicant of one of the schemes, although it is acknowledged that the benefits of this may extend to the wider household and beyond.

As SROI is a form of cost benefit analysis, the impact of the schemes is referred to as “benefits”, and the administration costs along with the grants or payments provided by the schemes are referred to as “costs”.

Table 1.1 The Seven Principles and Six Stages of SROI

The Seven Principles of SROI	The Six Stages of SROI
1. Involve stakeholders	1. Establishing scope and identifying key stakeholders
2. Understand what changes	2. Mapping outcomes
3. Value the things that matter	3. Evidencing outcomes and giving them a value
4. Only include what is material	4. Establishing impact
5. Do not over-claim	5. Calculating the SROI
6. Be transparent	6. Reporting, using and embedding
7. Verify the result	

Source: The Cabinet Office, 2009. A guide to Social Return on Investment. Society Media

1.3 Report Overview

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- **Section 2** offers some background context to the study
- **Section 3** presents an overview of the individual beneficiaries
- **Section 4** outlines the costs of the schemes (including administration and the grants made)
- **Section 5** brings together the benefits of the schemes for individual beneficiaries
- **Section 6** brings together the benefits of the schemes for organisational beneficiaries
- **Section 7** calculates the SROI
- **Section 8** provides conclusions and recommendations from the study.

Technical information (data analysis of support to individuals, and survey tables) has been annexed.

2.0 Background

2.1 Introduction

This section outlines the context in which this study operates, in relation to information on personal indebtedness and water debt experienced nationally.

2.2 Personal Indebtedness

Personal debt is increasingly common across the UK. Including mortgages, people in the UK owed a total of £1.50 trillion at the end of September 2016: up from £1.45 trillion at the end of September 2015, or an extra £1,037 per adult.⁵ In September 2016, consumer credit debt (excluding mortgages) reached £189 billion: over 60% more than the annual budget for the NHS.⁶ Cost of living debt has risen as expenditure on necessary goods, services and bills has increased faster than average and minimum wages.⁷

Debt is problematic for many people. For example:

- Citizens Advice dealt with over 600,000 new enquiries between July and September 2016 across England and Wales, 366,000 (60%) of which were debt-related⁸
- Over eight out of 10 people with debt problems say that their financial difficulties negatively affect their lives, personal relationships, health and ability to engage in, or find, work⁹
- For over half of these people, the debt problem was caused by a significant life event such as redundancy, relationship breakdown, illness or having children.¹⁰

Unmanageable personal debt reduces the amount of income which households have available to spend and can drive a cycle of poverty and distress that is difficult for families – including children – to escape. Problem debt can lead to mental health difficulties such as anxiety, stress or depression. The link between debt and mental health can work both ways: in one survey of people with mental health problems, 72% said that their mental health condition had made their financial situation worse – and 59% had taken on additional borrowing as a result.¹¹ In addition, 74% put off paying bills when they are unwell, and 71% avoid dealing with creditors. Furthermore, a report found that debt could negatively affect physical health, aggravating conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome through stress.¹²

⁵ <http://themoneycharity.org.uk/money-statistics/>

⁶ <http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/thenhs/about/Pages/overview.aspx>

⁷ Brown, T.; 2014. *The Impact of Personal Indebtedness in United Kingdom Households*, Especially on Children. House of Lords Library Note, LLN 2014/029. Available at: <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/LLN-2014-029/LLN-2014-029.pdf>.

⁸ <http://themoneycharity.org.uk/money-statistics/>

⁹ Consumer Credit Counselling Service research. Available here: <https://www.stepchange.org/policy-and-research/debt-research.aspx>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Holkar, M.; Mackenzie, P.; 2016. *Money on your Mind*. The Money and Mental Health Policy Institute.

¹² Brown, T.; 2014.

2.3 Water Debt

Revenue outstanding from unpaid water and sewerage bills¹³ increased from £1.9 billion to £2.2 billion between 2010/11 and 2014/15: an increase of 17% over four years. Analysis also shows that 24% of households in England and Wales experience water affordability risks (where a household spends more than 3% of their disposable income on water and sewage bills), and that 11% of households in England and Wales spend over 5% of their income on water. As a result, Ofwat has promoted a focus on vulnerable water customers, defined as those whose personal circumstances and characteristics combine with market conditions to create hardship.¹⁴

Water customers can experience debt for a variety of reasons. Complex life events and low income are perhaps the most common causes, complicated by bureaucratic processes such as changes to benefit entitlements or under- or over-payments of benefits.¹⁵ Other reasons include:

- Low levels of income
- Rising costs of living
- Budgeting issues and financial management
- Disability resulting in additional use of water
- Large family size resulting in higher than average water use
- Paying for water using an inappropriate tariff
- Lack of awareness of water support schemes.

It has also been reported that some customers lack basic financial capability and awareness of how water bills are calculated and charged. In addition, a study found that customers attached low importance to water bills, compared with food, rent and energy bills, whether or not they are in debt.¹⁶

The findings of independent research into consumers' experience of water debt found negative impacts on health and emotional wellbeing, family life and children.¹⁷ Stress, worry and anxiety were reported, as well as effects on individuals' ability to socialise, causing them to become isolated. Water arrears can contribute to problems in meeting other financial commitments. Problems with affordability mean that bills can go unpaid, or customers cut back on water use or other essentials in order to afford their bills, which is potentially damaging to health.¹⁸

It follows that improving the circumstances of individuals/households through financial assistance has the potential to lead to improved personal outcomes (both social and economic). Improving such outcomes can, in turn, benefit the public sector (through a reduced need to react to the consequences of negative outcomes, such as poor mental and physical health) and society more generally.

¹³ Henceforth, for brevity, water and sewerage bills will be referred to as water bills (or charges or debt).

¹⁴ OFWAT *Towards inclusive service for all – vulnerability focus* report. Available here: http://www.ofwat.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/pre_pre20160218vulnerabilitycross.pdf.

¹⁵ Walker, G., 2015. Sink or Swim: Consumer experiences of water and sewerage debt. Edinburgh: Citizens Advice Scotland.

¹⁶ Walker, 2015.

¹⁷ Walker, 2015.

¹⁸ House of Commons Briefing Paper Number CBP06596, 8 August 2016.

Water companies deliver a wide range of services to support vulnerable customers who are struggling to pay their water bill. Customers who are in financial hardship and have difficulty with bills should contact their water provider first so that they can discuss what help and solutions they can provide.

Severn Trent, Thames Water and United Utilities recognises that many vulnerable customers may need more attention, so they each established and fund independent charitable trusts to enable vulnerable individuals to access extra assistance. Their three charitable trusts are free from company control and are not performance-managed by water companies. As self-standing, self-governing charities, the water company trust funds are free to determine their own schemes and funding priorities.

3.0 Individual Beneficiaries

3.1 Introduction

This section provides an analysis of the demographics and circumstances of the individual beneficiaries of the schemes in the most recent financial year (2015/16). Following this, the section collates feedback on the process of applying for a grant or payment, and the support received as a result.

Most of the analysis (including all demographic information) relates to the monitoring data collected from successful applications. The data for this period encompasses a total of 13,656 individual beneficiaries of support across the four schemes. Full data tables are provided in Annex Two. The split of beneficiaries by scheme is shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Beneficiaries by scheme, 2015-16

Scheme	Beneficiaries	%
Thames Water Customer Assistance Fund	5,204	38%
United Utilities Trust Fund	4,747	35%
Severn Trent Trust Fund	2,582	19%
Thames Water Trust Fund	1,123	8%
TOTAL:	13,656	

Source: Monitoring data, 2015/16

In addition, further data was collected from 314 individual beneficiaries who provided full responses to an online survey conducted by Ecorys.¹⁹ 314 responses from a population of 13,656 gives a margin of error (confidence interval) of 5.5% at a 95% confidence level. This is the largest survey of its type conducted across the schemes' beneficiaries to date, and the response rate was supplemented with email and telephone reminders to maximise responses as much as possible. Full data tables are provided in Annex Three. Views from the in-depth consultations with 10 beneficiaries, nine organisations and six staff administering the schemes are also included where relevant.

3.2 Beneficiary Demographics

Monitoring data for 2015/16 shows that, for each of the four schemes, **the majority of beneficiaries were aged 45 or older** and, overall, 54% of beneficiaries were in this age range. Based on the categories used,²⁰ 45-54 was the most common age for beneficiaries.

¹⁹ Comprising 119 full completions by Thames Water Customer Assistance Fund beneficiaries (38%), 77 Severn Trent Trust Fund beneficiaries (25%), 74 United Utilities Trust Fund beneficiaries (24%) and 44 Thames Water Trust Fund beneficiaries (14%).

²⁰ Age brackets were derived from ONS Harmonised Principle 3. Source: ONS. 2015. *Harmonised Concepts and Question for Social Data Sources: Primary Principles (Demographic Information, Household Composition and Relationships)*. ONS: UK.

Overall, just over half of beneficiaries (55%) rent their home from a housing association, and 80% of successful applications were from households containing only one adult.²¹ This would seem to make logical sense, as households with more than one adult may be able to rely on more than one income (including benefit entitlements), which would ease the debt burden, relative to a household with only one potential source of income.

Most beneficiaries (61%) had no children. This was true for all schemes. Only 8% of beneficiaries were from households containing three or more children: less than the national average of 15%.²²

17% of households included a disabled person. Ethnicity data was only available for Severn Trent Trust Fund and United Utilities Trust Fund. Excluding beneficiaries who did not provide a response to this question, 83% of beneficiaries were White British.

3.3 Individual Circumstances

All of the trust funds provide relief to people who are in need, poverty, hardship or other distress and are unable to meet or pay charges for the supply of water and/or sewerage services provided by the water companies.

As might be expected, most of the help requested was related to water bill debt (arrears or charges): 87% of beneficiaries needed help with this. In addition, 20% needed help with (non-water) current bills or charges, 13% needed help with meeting other costs and 8% with other arrears.²³

The level of water debts reported were most commonly less than £500; 46% of beneficiaries reported less than £500 of water debt, although this proportion should be treated with caution as Thames Water Trust Fund beneficiaries are excluded from this data (no water debt amounts were recorded for this fund), as are beneficiaries without a figure for water debt. If these groups were included, the proportion with fewer than £500 (but greater than £0) would be 34%. A total of 41 beneficiaries (less than 1%) reported water debt of £5,000 or more.

The cumulative total of water debt was £10,956,020. This equates to £920 per person across everyone in water debt, or £802 per person across all 13,656 beneficiaries (including those without a figure for water debt and Thames Water Trust Fund beneficiaries).

The online survey revealed that more than half of beneficiaries thought that their concerns about money affected their mental health, physical health, relationships with family or partner and job or employment status. Mental and physical health were thought to be particularly affected (Table 3.2): 82% and 73% of respondents said that their mental and physical health had been affected by their money concerns respectively.

²¹ More specifically: 'How many other adults or children over 16 live with you?' recorded '0'.

²² ONS, 2016. Statistical bulletin: Families and Households, 2016. Available here: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/bulletins/familiesandhouseholds/2016>

²³ Percentages are mutually exclusive and do not sum to 100% because beneficiaries may request help for multiple problems.

Table 3.2 Thinking about before you received support from the fund, did your concerns about money have any impact on the following areas of your life?

	TOTAL
Mental health (including levels of stress, anxiety or depression)	82%
Physical health	73%
Relationships with family or partner	57%
Job or employment status	52%
Relationship with friends	42%

Source: *Ecorys survey*

More than half of beneficiaries responding to the survey thought that their concerns about money affected their partner’s or family’s mental health, physical health and relationships with them or other family members. Mental health was again thought to be particularly affected (Table 3.7); with 70% of respondents reporting that their partner and/or family’s mental health had been affected by money concerns.

Table 3.3 Thinking about before you received support from the fund, did your concerns about money have any impact on the following areas of your partner’s and/or family’s life?

	TOTAL
Mental health (including levels of stress, anxiety or depression)	70%
Physical health	58%
Relationships with you or other family members	55%
Relationship with friends	40%
Job or employment status	39%

Source: *Ecorys survey*

The relationship between health and debt works both ways, with health problems also leading to debt issues. In comments from the survey and in-depth consultations, a number of beneficiaries stated that the onset or worsening of mental health issues (brought on by life events such as divorce or bereavement) or chronic physical health conditions (heart attack, stroke, cancer and disability were stated) led to them and/or their partner and family becoming indebted. The impact of unemployment – sometimes brought about by illness or caring responsibilities – was also highlighted by consultees in that the loss of income caused them to accumulate debts, including water debt.

Table 3.4 highlights some survey responses which illustrate how such life events can have knock-on effects on wellbeing.

Table 3.4 Examples of Individual Beneficiaries' Circumstances

*"It was only when my husband's illness deteriorated and we were unable to work that I had to ask for help. If I am ever in the position of wealth or employment I would donate to the charity to thank them for their help; I was under considerable stress, I still am, I lost my husband last year and now I am unable to obtain work because of being out of the circle of employment and contacts for the duration of my husband's ill health...However, this gave me hope and maintained my faith in human nature..." – **Beneficiary***

*"In quick succession my mother died, my [father] became critically ill and I became his carer until he had a transplant this year and then I became dangerously ill." – **Beneficiary***

*"Thank you for help given and I would appreciate ongoing support. Without this help everything would be so much worse now. The help from this trust gave me some much needed breathing space from the wolves at the door! It's an ongoing thing due to marriage breakdown and illness. If only there was more knowledge of the help that is available it would give people hope that not everyone and everything is against them as that is often the way a person is left feeling when their lives get tipped upside down and ill health stops income." – **Beneficiary***

Source: Ecorys survey

3.4 Application Process for Individuals

Feedback on the application process was very positive; most beneficiaries interviewed found the process to be simple and straightforward and the questions appropriate. Most reported that they did not need any additional support when filling out the form, but of those that did, people were generally very satisfied with the support received from the schemes during the process because they were helpful, non-judgemental and flexible with the support provided.

*"The process was relatively simple; I didn't feel as if I was being judged." – **Beneficiary***

Staff administering the schemes emphasised that the assessment is an individualised process, based on individual circumstances. Beneficiaries saw the flexibility of the application form as a benefit, as people could submit their financial information in a way that suited them, rather than having to fit it into a certain format as is sometimes required by other organisations. While on an operational level, having remote access to customer information for two of the funds has made a big difference in terms of how quickly applications can be processed.

Some beneficiaries reported through the interviews or in survey comments that they did not realise that they could request white goods or other household furniture, and they thought it would be beneficial to advertise this. They thought this option was a real benefit of the schemes.

One consultee from a trust fund reported that the water company put the customer's account on hold, so no payments could be demanded while their application for support was processed, after being notified of their application by a scheme.

Staff at some of the schemes reported that they follow-up with unsuccessful applicants, not least as there may be other schemes for which they may be eligible.

A few beneficiaries pointed out that the schemes supported groups in need who may otherwise be overlooked for support. Groups mentioned included single people (also including single parents and single fathers) and employed people on low incomes or those going through a crisis period. One single parent said that since getting assistance, she is in the process of setting up a support group for other single parents, with an aim to alert them to available assistance, such as these schemes.

Specific health, social and economic outcomes of the grants are not monitored, because of the work that would be involved to do so. There was consensus amongst organisations and staff administering the schemes that post-award monitoring would be useful in demonstrating the effects of the support, but has to be weighed up against the capacity this would require to implement.

3.5 Support Provided to Individuals

According to monitoring data, water awards were given to 99.7% of beneficiaries. Half (50%) of beneficiaries receiving a water award received a sum of £500 or less. In addition, 91% of beneficiaries (including the 0.3% that did not receive a water award) received a Further Assistance Payment award, which covers extra expenses aside from water charges, and was typically given to cover the cost of household goods that a family could not otherwise afford. Examples cited by individuals included a cooker, washing machine/tumble dryer, fridge/freezer, bed/mattress or dishwasher. Four-fifths (80%) of all awards granted were less than £250.

Most of the beneficiaries who were interviewed found that, within three to four weeks of making an application, a decision had been made about whether the application was successful or not. A minority of people commented that the process took too long which led to worry and distress because of the uncertainty about whether or not they would receive support. Although the exact circumstances of these cases are not known, in some cases applications take longer to process for administrative reasons: for example, because additional information was required, or because the beneficiary could not provide necessary information.

All of the beneficiaries interviewed received a financial grant/payment which was paid straight into their water account. Although most people were offered additional support and advice, some did not take it up because they were either receiving money advice support from another organisation (such as a housing association or a charity) or because they felt that the grant they had received had helped them to get back in control of their finances. For those who did take-up additional advice and support, this ranged from benefits entitlement checks and money management support, to being placed on a payment plan by their water company.

For most people, the support that they received went beyond their expectations of the service,²⁴ especially in terms of the added support from Auriga (such as benefits entitlement checks and money management support). For some, this was because they did not initially realise that they could be given a payment to clear some or all of their debt.

A number of beneficiaries have recommended the scheme that supported them to friends, family or others within their community.

²⁴ Only one person in our sample commented that the support did not meet their expectations; this was because the grant paid to them was less than their water debt, meaning that they still had some debt to pay off. In addition, the customer was not aware that the grant would go directly to the water company, and expected that there would be some that they could use for rent arrears or other household bills.

4.0 Costs of Operating the Schemes

4.1 Introduction

This section presents the costs of operating the four schemes.

For an SROI, the costs of an intervention are typically made up of:

- **Direct costs**, or the costs incurred in delivering the scheme (including both administration costs and the value of the grants made)
- **Indirect costs**, incurred by stakeholders not directly involved in delivery but who play a role in supporting delivery through referrals or volunteering time or resources for example.

4.2 Direct Costs of the Schemes

According to monitoring data, the costs of the four schemes in 2015/16 were £15,439,818, of which grant expenditure were £13,384,760. This is a total figure, including grant expenditure (water grants and Further Assistance Payments to individuals and organisations) as well as management and administration costs.

The schemes are supported primarily by donations from Severn Trent, United Utilities and Thames Water. As a not-for-profit company, Auriga Services donates any surpluses to the schemes.

4.3 Indirect Costs of the Schemes

After consultation with stakeholders and programme staff, the following indirect costs were uncovered:

- **Match funding**
- **Volunteers** providing their time to support the delivery of money advice with organisational beneficiaries of the schemes (see Section 6 for more information)
- **Professional time, fees and costs of proceedings** from bankruptcy and Debt Relief Orders (see Section 5.2.1 for more information)

Match funding can sometimes be provided by the organisation themselves, to supplement organisational grants made by the schemes. However, the amount of match funding provided by organisations is not known, so no estimate can be made. This is also the case for the professional time, fees and costs of proceedings from instigating bankruptcy and Debt Relief Orders (see Section 5.2.1 for more information).

Similarly, although the number of volunteers working with the projects supported by the funds in 2015/16 is known (55 volunteers), the time they spent supporting projects cannot be estimated. By helping to deliver money advice, volunteers' time can also be seen as a benefit (see Section 6 for more information).

As indirect costs cannot be estimated accurately, the true costs of the schemes are likely to be underestimated. However, these other costs are likely to be small relative to the direct costs set out above.

5.0 Benefits of the Schemes to Individuals

5.1 Introduction

This section provides a comprehensive analysis of the outcomes of the schemes, taking primarily from the survey of individual beneficiaries conducted as part of this study, supplemented with views from in-depth consultations and data analysis. The identified outcomes following receipt of the grant or payment have been grouped into the following categories:

- Finances and financial capability
- Mental and physical health
- Housing
- Relationships
- Employment and employability
- Other outcomes.

The sustainability of these outcomes is also considered. The section ends with findings on the impact of the schemes on customers' perceptions of water companies.

5.2 Outcomes Following the Grant or Payment

5.2.1 Finances and financial capability

The majority (82%) of beneficiaries completing the survey believed that the support they had received from a scheme helped their ability to pay their water bills.

Several of the in-depth consultees had all of their water debt paid off. Even if the grant did not pay off the entire water debt, it generally allowed them to 'free up' some of their money so that they could put it towards other household bills or other payments, or avoid other borrowing (one beneficiary said they would have taken out a payday loan to purchase a cooker had the scheme not provided one). Having their water supply cut off was a fear reported by a number of beneficiaries, although by law domestic customers cannot have their water supply disconnected.²⁵

As a result of the support, some customers have been put on a payment plan which has helped them to keep on track with paying their water bills. For many of the beneficiaries, the grant or payment allowed them the opportunity to have a "clean slate" or "fresh start" through which they could start to organise their other finances. Three beneficiaries summed up these feelings:

"It's a nice feeling to not have the debt hanging over me." – Beneficiary

"My water bills are better because I was given the opportunity to start afresh." – Beneficiary

²⁵ <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/water/water-supply/problems-with-paying-your-water-bill/if-you-don-t-pay-your-water-bill>

“Once the water problem was neutralised, I thought: ‘Let’s look at other bills and plan what to do with them. Ever since then I have not defaulted. I have debts, but I am keeping on top of them. Dealing with the water bill was a watershed. Massive.” – Beneficiary

These sentiments are supported by the survey finding that, by freeing up other money, 63% of beneficiaries felt that the support they received with their water payments helped them to pay other essential bills such as gas, electricity, telephone or council tax. In addition, 34% believed the support had helped them to start paying off any other debts; for example: credit cards, bank or overdraft charges, bank or payday lender loans.

Prior to the support, a number of beneficiaries reported feeling “out of control”. One consultee described that a clerical error caused rent arrears, and in order to alleviate these debts, others were built up. They continued:

“...I was in a spiralling debt problem. I had other debts [so] water was unsolvable. It was incredibly serious, I was being threatened with legal action, it was affecting my credit rating, and there was no way I could clear the water debt.

...I wanted to run away and make myself homeless. I stopped dealing with everything. I was ignoring other debts.

...Cracking the water thing, everything was easier, I was able to engage with the council, and arrears and court action was cleared. There was no fear of eviction. The support made a really big difference.” – Beneficiary

Regardless of whether all of their water debt or total debt has been paid off, many beneficiaries reported improved financial capability. They were more cautious in managing their money and some commented that they budget more carefully so that they can pay for essential items like food and clothes, as well as paying the monthly bills. Some customers have received additional support either through Auriga or through external organisations, such as debt management agencies, to help them with budgeting and managing their money and improve their financial capability. After receiving a payment or grant, some customers were then supported by their water company to set up a payment plan or direct debit, or they agreed on a reduced bill plan.

For a handful of beneficiaries, the support received from the scheme has given them the confidence to ask other utility companies – such as gas and electricity – if there is any help they can provide to help alleviate or reduce their bills.

“[Name of water company] was the only company that said there was an alternative. It made me braver in dealing with other organisations by suggesting to them to look at other ways.” – Beneficiary

Other outcomes following the support mentioned by beneficiaries included opening a bank account (and improving their credit score), saving money, claiming Employment Support Allowance (including one person who won an ESA tribunal following support), securing a Debt Relief Order and support through bankruptcy. Regarding this, Further Assistance Payments also supported individuals who could not afford to pay the

fees to instigate bankruptcy or Debt Relief Orders proceedings. These allowed for debt to be written off so that the individual could start afresh. In 2015/16, the schemes covered £128,650 of fees for 412 individuals. This enabled them to write off £9,343,871 of debt (£7,582,957 from bankruptcy and £1,760,915 from Debt Relief Orders).²⁶

5.2.2 Mental and physical health

People were most likely to report positive mental health outcomes as a result of being supported by the fund. Over half (60%) of beneficiaries reported that their mental health had improved since receiving support from the fund, with 36% adding that the mental health of their partner or family had improved. A number of comments were made that illustrated that the support had also made a difference to children's lives, as parents' stress caused strain on their children.

For many beneficiaries, receiving the grant or payment helped to lift a weight off their shoulders, which generally had a positive impact on the overwhelming feelings of stress and worry that many were experiencing. For some people, the grant or payment provided a real turning point in their mental health; it offered the opportunity to relieve some of the debt and begin to make positive changes to their finances. The same could apply to their partner or other members of the family who were responsible for, or affected by, the same bills and issues with debt.

It was a light at the end of a very dark tunnel.” – Beneficiary

“At the time it was awful; getting the money was like somebody had switched the light on. You start thinking you're a bad person, but the support really restored my faith in humanity. It was a really good thing to happen at the time.” – Beneficiary

A number of beneficiaries commented via the survey or the consultations that they had been prescribed medication or treatment to deal with diagnosed mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety. Some beneficiaries implied that less medication or treatment (including GP visits) was necessary following support from one of the schemes. It is difficult to draw this conclusion with certainty as we do not have access to beneficiaries' medical records, but it does seem a reasonable assumption given the views expressed. One beneficiary mentioned that they would have been pushed into alcoholism without the help they received. They said:

“[Without the support] I'd still be in arrears. At the time I felt that I'd never be able to pay them off, I felt so depressed and I felt that I'd never get out of the house... it would have turned downhill quickly, turning to alcohol... To be honest I don't think I'd be here.” – Beneficiary

Some beneficiaries also reported that improved mental health conditions had more life affirming consequences. The 'turning point' brought about by the grant or payment had, in some cases, led to individuals leading more independent lives, being able to venture out of their home and deal with other people or issues. In a handful of cases, beneficiaries commented that the support was "life changing" or "life saving": that life was not worth living before the support, but that they had a more positive outlook once they had began to deal with their debt. Again, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions that beneficiaries would

²⁶ Source: Auriga Services.

have made attempts on their life; however it does seem reasonable to assume that in some cases the likelihood of such attempts may have been avoided as a result of beneficiaries being supported at a time of crisis. The potential benefit, and cost saving, from this could be substantial.

Some of the beneficiaries who were interviewed did not report having improved mental health, largely because there was still a significant issue in their life – such as a new medical diagnosis or a divorce – that was impacting on their quality of life. This conclusion is reinforced by some of the comments made via the survey. For example:

“I worry so much because I’ve got fibromyalgia, so I am in so much pain. Plus I’ve had breast cancer and I’m waiting to go back and get the breast removed again, so yes I do worry a lot.” – Beneficiary

In addition, 41% of beneficiaries reported in the survey that their physical health had improved since receiving support from the fund, with 26% adding that the physical health of their partner or family had improved. It seems that the support from the schemes has allowed some beneficiaries to stop worrying about their finances and focus more on the physical health of themselves or their family, which could often be the reason why they fell into debt in the first place.

The white goods or furniture provision from some the funds were also valued as a means for improving customers’ physical health. A number of comments were made by those who were provided with a fridge/freezer which enabled them to store fresh and frozen food for longer and prepare ‘proper’ meals which improved their standard of living and quality of life.

Sleep was another outcome which was mentioned by a number of beneficiaries. For example:

“My body does not ache as much now that I sleep on a bed.” – Beneficiary

It was clear that the improvements to mental and physical health following the support could be significant. Table 5.1 highlights some survey responses reflecting this.

Table 5.1 Examples of Significant Mental and Physical Health Improvements

“I have never had debts all my life until my partner got made redundant, I got seriously ill and our income disappeared so debts piled up. The enormity of the task to clear them was beyond our financial scope and would never have been cleared. When hope disappears you may as well be dead. The trust fund payment cleared the water rates that gave hope, the fridge freezer was an added bonus, the rest of bills became manageable and now every penny is sorted and we can live within our reduced budget but no debt. Everybody happy.” – Beneficiary

“It was massively helpful in both a practical and emotional way at a really difficult time. My husband ran up debts, had a breakdown and left. I was left with the house, two children and his debts. I had a job and a salary but this was not enough to cover the expenses (including mortgage) on the larger house and debt repayments. If this can happen to me (I am a University Lecturer with three degrees) it could happen to anyone. The process was relatively simple, I didn’t feel as if I was being judged and I am immensely grateful.” – Beneficiary

“The fund came into our lives at just the right time we were sinking lower and lower with money concerns after I had been diagnosed as terminal with renal cancer. If this was not enough, I could no longer work and the bills keep coming, and piles upon piles of forms to handle and fill in. When you feel as we did, it was the last thing we wanted [to do]. I felt so much better knowing we were keeping a roof over our heads, that we were going to be warm and have money for food shopping. This all helps when a worry has been taken away and there is someone you can turn to. I hope that when I am no longer here that my [spouse] will be able to get in touch for help with all the things that will need to be sorted [such as] benefits and what to apply for.” –

Beneficiary

“This is an invaluable scheme. I would have got further into debt if the Fund hadn't helped me. I was signed off sick due to spinal surgery. I had another spinal operation this year and my employer has now terminated my employment as I cannot do my job. I am still in receipt of ESA [Employment Support Allowance] and awaiting the result of another claim I have made to the fund. I was very depressed and stressed about my debts and when the fund paid off the arrears and also bought me a new mattress for my bed, which was such a relief following my surgery that I burst into tears when a lady from the Fund rang me to tell me the good news.” –

Beneficiary

Source: Ecorys survey

5.2.3 Housing

44% of survey respondents reported that their housing situation (for example, being able to pay rent or mortgage) had improved since receiving support from one of the schemes. Some beneficiaries believed that they would have been evicted or lost their home without support. One mentioned he underwent a period of rough sleeping prior to support, and that he would have carried on struggling without the help he received. A number of beneficiaries mentioned that, following the support, they were able to move to better or more appropriate accommodation, including one who was able to sell their house to move into smaller rented accommodation, which released money.

5.2.4 Relationships

47% and 31% of beneficiaries reported in the survey that their relationships with their family/partner and friends respectively had improved since receiving support from the fund. 31% added that their partner or family's relationships with them or other family members had improved, and 18% felt that their partner or family's relationships with friends had also improved.

In the course of the in-depth consultations, beneficiaries generally commented that, as a result of the support, their relationships with other family members and friends had improved. Often, the positive mental health outcomes that have been achieved through receiving the support – such as reduced worry, stress, and feelings of anxiety and depression – have given people more energy and confidence to leave their homes and reconnect with their friends and the outside world. In addition, the practical aspect of having more money freed up enables people to socialise with their friends without being as worried about their debts or bills.

*“I feel more happy, I have more friendships and I generally feel much better. I've managed to turn my whole life around.” – **Beneficiary***

*“I've been getting out and about a lot more. I struggled before.” – **Beneficiary***

The support has also helped people with their relationships with their family. In many cases the debt they faced was putting strain on their relationships with their partners or children. Several beneficiaries highlighted that they felt guilty that they could not afford to do many things with their children, but after receiving the grant, they were able to do more activities. One beneficiary commented that they were able to move back in with their family following the support.

“Stress makes you more introverted and less patient, because you are always thinking about that debt. It was difficult not having the freedom to do things with the children... Now I can budget more and with some financial planning I can do activities with the children, so I’m less stressed about that.” – Beneficiary

“I can now afford to plan things with my children.” – Beneficiary

However, for some beneficiaries there were still strains within their family relationships as a result of their ongoing water and household debts. For example, one beneficiary highlighted that his family still struggles with paying bills and *“the kids suffer”* because they cannot afford to pay for heating charges.

5.2.5 Employment and employability

Around one-quarter (24%) of beneficiaries reported in the survey that their job or employment status had improved since receiving support from the fund and 15% believed that the job or employment status of their partner or family had improved. For example, some beneficiaries felt that the worry and time spent dealing with debt was freed up, enabling them to focus on looking for employment. Some beneficiaries commented directly that they were able to secure employment following the support, which improved their earnings and overall wellbeing. One beneficiary gained the *“financial freedom to take on an educational course.”*

As a number of beneficiaries had long-term health problems that were preventing them from working, it was unlikely that the grant or payment could help these particular beneficiaries to get back into employment. However, one beneficiary commented on how receiving the support from Auriga and the grant had helped her to build up her confidence so she felt in an emotionally better position to apply for a job. She has since secured part-time employment and is looking towards moving into full-time employment when the opportunity arises.

5.2.6 Other outcomes

Positively, 34% of beneficiaries reported in the survey that other outcomes had improved since receiving support from one of the schemes. Outcomes reported include:

- Ability to eat healthily and cook ‘proper’ meals (can purchase food in bulk which is cheaper due to award of fridge/freezer)
- Ability to use shower more frequently without having to worry about the cost
- “Believing that there are still good companies/people out there”
- First family holiday “in years” (“small one but great”)
- “I’m no longer too frightened to open the door in case the caller is a bailiff”
- Instigate charitable giving to Water Aid
- Inspire a single parent to set up a support group for other single parents, with an aim to alert them to the assistance available, such as these schemes.

- Not having to do a weekly trip to the laundrette or hand wash clothes (“I don’t worry anymore about not having clean clothes” and “I have not had to hand wash clothing which I had been doing in my kitchen sink for the 3 years previous to my application”)
- Reassurance that help is available
- Reducing water usage.

5.3 Sustainability of Outcomes

75% of survey respondents feel more confident managing their bills in the future after receiving support from one of the schemes. This follows from the earlier finding that the grant or payment provided space which helped beneficiaries to take control of their finances. As one beneficiary added:

“Because I am so scared that I’ll go back to how I was, I have had to learn to manage my money... I’m much more confident now; I’ve never saved before but now I do.” – Beneficiary

Despite many people feeling confident about managing their bills in the future, this does not negate the vulnerability of some water customers to significant life events, nor free them from unforgiving circumstances such as low income, unemployment or health problems, which are often deep-rooted. Some continued to maintain debts (see Section 7.3.3 of this report for further details) and experience difficulties, with the award only providing temporary respite, especially in cases where their debt is spread across several areas.

One trust fund estimated that, before receiving the grant, recipients were paying on average 35% of their annual water bill. Following the grant, the amount they were able to pay more than doubled to 80% on average. Long-term outcomes data from this trust fund suggests that averages of 80-85% of total payment levels are made up to 10 years later. It would be helpful if this analysis could be replicated for each of the schemes and for the schemes as a whole, to ascertain the true sustainability of the schemes for beneficiaries.

5.4 Impact of the Schemes on Customers’ Perceptions of Water Companies

A number of individual beneficiaries commented via the survey or in-depth consultations that their involvement with the scheme has “transformed” their view of their water company and/or water companies in general. Two consultees reflected these views:

“They were so understanding of our situation that I am still moved today.” – Beneficiary

“I say it again: great people make great companies, and that’s what I feel about [this water company].” – Beneficiary

One consultee suggested that the scheme be promoted further to enhance water companies’ reputations, particularly amongst vulnerable clients.

6.0 Benefits of the Schemes to Organisations

6.1 Introduction

This section provides an analysis of data relating to organisations benefiting from financial awards from three of the four schemes (Severn Trent Trust Fund, Thames Water Trust Fund and United Utilities Trust Fund). Data was provided by Auriga Services.

Each scheme has objective criteria for assessing and determining applications for organisational grants. In general, they allocate funding to projects that:

- Enhance and develop the provision of debt and money advice services within the water company's geographical area
- Demonstrate significant project outcomes for vulnerable customers in hardship and who are unable to meet the costs of water and/or sewerage charges
- Support the poorest parts of Great Britain determined by indices of deprivation.

As the benefits to organisations can be spread over a number of financial years (not least for grants paid towards the end of the financial year, and for projects that receive continuation funding), this section discusses grants made dating back to 2009/10: the entire period for which data was available. This section also discusses the qualitative benefits resulting from the awards, as mentioned by the nine beneficiary organisations that were consulted.

6.2 Grants Awarded

Since 2009/10, the three schemes have awarded 143 grants to 112 projects in 99 organisations, with a combined value of £5,862,438. The United Utilities Trust Fund awarded 58 grants, the Severn Trent Trust Fund 45 and the Thames Water Trust Fund 40.

The grants averaged £40,996, ranging from £545 to £128,146. 25 of the 143 grants (17%) were for a continuation of previously funded activity. The vast majority of the grants were to provide debt advice (for example, welfare benefit, financial capability) and/or awareness services, with a further small number of grants used to purchase promotional material or to meet other expenses.

The organisations that were consulted provided positive feedback on the grant making process:

"The [scheme] were very friendly, encouraging and the process was smooth." – Organisation

"The [scheme] are very approachable; it feels like a partnership." – Organisation

6.3 Organisational Benefits

Records show that the grants were used to support a total of 170 staff and 484 volunteers (1.2 members of staff and 3.4 volunteers on average per grant). Paid staff provided 3,797 hours of work in total each week: equivalent to over 506 working days.²⁷

Grants were provided to improve the capacity of the chosen organisations to be able to provide a holistic package of support, which includes water and other debt advice. For example, one organisation commented that being able to provide holistic support is beneficial to clients, most of whom present a number of inter-related problems:

“When you see a client, they don’t come with just with one issue. They have chaotic lives. They aren’t just coming because they got a [water] bill. They’ve got that much going on they don’t know where to start.” – Organisation

Organisations typically used the funding to employ a specialist water debt adviser who could deliver sessions to clients specialising in water debt advice, enabling them to provide more efficient and better targeted support. In some cases sessions were also delivered at events or to key people within the community, who could pass on their newly acquired knowledge to their own clients. In addition, the specialist adviser can share knowledge on water debt with colleagues or volunteers; water debts were considered by one organisational consultee to have been particularly complicated and therefore difficult to advise on prior to the grant.

Without the grant, capacity for specialist advice would not have been available to clients or shared with colleagues, and clients would have simply been signposted to another service if staff were aware of one, thereby increasing other waiting lists. One service said they would have closed without the grant. As one consultee said:

“It provides us with the ability to provide holistic support... if we lost it, there would be a sizeable gap.” – Organisation

One organisation had been able to get continuation funding to continue their project following the initial grant, though generally organisations thought they would struggle to secure funding to continue their work in the absence of the grant. One organisation had won awards and new contracts on the back of the grant.

The grants were felt to be especially important in a time when demand for advice about water debt, or debt in general, seemed to be increasing. For example, one consultee felt that referrals from housing providers in particular had increased (particularly as the organisation was now able to offer direct support for water debt).

²⁷ Assuming 7.5 hours constitutes a working day. Source: ONS Labour Market Statistics

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/timeseries/ybuy/lms>

6.4 Client Benefits

Monitoring data suggests that the organisational grants reached 53,773 individuals (498 per grant on average, for the 108 grants where this information was provided). Information on the amount of debt presented was provided for 100 of the grants made (70% of the total grants). Debt presented totalled £125,898,335, of which £7,545,060 (6%) was water debt.

As a result of the support, 6,061 funding applications were completed and 7,965 payment plans were set up, enabling recipients to pay or clear their debts. In addition, over three-quarters (76%) of those who had previously reported being unable to meet their water charges were subsequently able to do so.

Consultees from the funded organisations emphasised, in particular, the financial outcomes for their clients that have resulted from the specialist advice, including budgeting, rescheduling debts, putting clients on better tariffs or discount schemes, awareness of the risks of using payday loans, and being able to sustain water payments and other arrears or having them written off. Consultees reported that this has led to better quality of life for people supported by the resource. Payments were also made to support individuals who could not afford to pay the fees to instigate bankruptcy or Debt Relief Orders proceedings.

Although information on the profile of those receiving advice (by the organisation) has not been recorded, it seems reasonable to assume that their circumstances would be broadly similar to those individuals receiving an individual grant and that, as revealed by the survey of individual grant recipients (see Section 5), the support received could potentially contribute to a range of positive outcomes, particularly in the case of those receiving direct support to make their debts more manageable. The value of such outcomes is highlighted by the SROI approach set out in Section 7, although in keeping with the principle of taking a conservative approach we have not attempted to explicitly value the benefits of organisational grants. This is also due to the limitations in the available monitoring data (not least the difficulty in restricting the benefits to a single year, to match the benefits to individuals) and the risk of overlap between those who received advice and individual grant recipients (particularly as it is known that 6,061 other funding applications were subsequently completed following receipt of an organisational grant).

It should also be noted that, for a number of the projects supported, their work continues, and therefore the number of individuals supported with the stated grant would be expected to increase further. In addition, the grant giving from the three schemes will also continue, benefiting more projects and organisations in the future.

7.0 A Social Return on Investment (SROI) of the Schemes

7.1 Introduction

This section collates the costs and benefits of the schemes (to individuals and organisations), to provide a Social Return on Investment (SROI) ratio. An SROI aims to quantify the impact the schemes have on society. An introduction to SROI as a methodology is provided in Section 1.2.3 of this report.

7.2 Summary of the Costs of the Schemes

As outlined in Section 4 of this report, **the combined costs of the four schemes in 2015/16 were £15,439,818**, including grants to individuals and organisations. As previously stated, these refer to the direct costs of (or inputs to) the schemes (including both administration and the value of the grants made), and do not include indirect costs, which cannot be valued but are likely to be small relative to direct costs.

7.3 Summary of the Benefits of the Schemes to Individual Beneficiaries

7.3.1 Outcomes

13,656 individual beneficiaries were supported by the four schemes in 2015/16. 314 of these beneficiaries responded to our survey on the outcomes they have experienced following support.²⁸ The main outcomes from the support, as defined in the survey, related to finances and financial capability, health, housing, relationships, employment and employability (plus any other outcomes that respondents reported). Table 7.1 shows the proportions of survey respondents reportedly experiencing these outcomes based on the survey, and applies these proportions to the 13,656 beneficiaries as a whole, to estimate how many beneficiaries would experience these outcomes if the survey findings were applied to all beneficiaries in 2015/16.

²⁸ Outcomes are effectively 'gross outcomes'. Those whose outcomes deteriorated since receiving support have not been deducted from the positive outcomes.

Table 7.1 Outcomes data

Have any of these areas improved since you received support from the fund?	% of survey respondents reporting improvement	% of total number of individual beneficiaries (13,656)
Financial outcomes		
Has the support you have received from the fund helped your ability to pay your water bills?	82%	11,264
Has the support you have received from the fund helped your ability to pay other essential bills (for example, gas, electricity, telephone or council tax)?	63%	8,568
Has the support you received from the fund helped you to start paying off any other debts (for example, credit cards, bank or overdraft charges, bank or payday lender loans)?	34%	4,610
Health outcomes		
Mental health (including levels of stress, anxiety or depression) of your life	60%	8,133
Mental health (including levels of stress, anxiety or depression) of your partner's and/or family's life	36%	4,871
Physical health of your life	41%	5,654
Physical health of your partner's and/or family's life	26%	3,566
Housing outcomes		
Has the support you have received from the fund helped your housing situation (for example, fear of eviction, being able to pay for your rent or mortgage)?	44%	5,958
Relationships		
Your relationships with family or partner	47%	6,393
Your relationships with friends	31%	4,262
Your partner's and/or family's relationships with you or other family members	31%	4,262
Your partner's and/or family's relationships with their friends	18%	2,522
Employment		
Your job or employment status	24%	3,218
Your partner's and/or family's job or employment status	15%	2,044
Other outcomes		
Has anything else in your life improved since getting support from the fund?	34%	4,610

Source: Monitoring data (total beneficiaries); Ecorys survey (all other information)

7.3.2 Monetising outcomes

Next, it is necessary to monetise the outcomes of the support, by assigning a proxy value for each outcome. Each value has been chosen to last up to one year²⁹ and to best represent the cost that each outcome represents, based upon findings from the survey and qualitative research with beneficiaries, organisations and staff administering the schemes.

²⁹ Due to the SROI principle to not over-claim, and the uncertainty involved as to whether or not outcomes can be sustained longer than one year's duration. For example employment, which would otherwise provide hundreds of thousands of pounds' of economic benefit, should a beneficiary sustain that employment over their lifetime – though this cannot be known with any degree of certainty.

Values have been selected from a variety of sources including the Personal Social Services Research Unit's (PSSRU) Unit Costs of Health and Social Care – which covers unit costs for more than 100 health and social care services each year – New Economy's Unit Cost Database, and wider literature. The values selected are outlined in Table 7.2. For some outcomes, more than one value has been sourced depending on the severity of the issue.

Table 7.2 Proxy values

Have any of these areas improved since you received support from the fund?	Proxy value (£, for one year)	Proxy item	Proxy source
Financial outcomes			
Ability to pay water bills	96	12 Citizens Advice Bureau sessions at £8 per 15 minutes	DfE Family Savings Calculator
Ability to pay other essential bills (for example, gas, electricity, telephone or council tax)	-	<i>As above, to avoid double counting</i>	
Ability to pay off other debts (for example, credit cards, bank or overdraft charges, bank or payday lender loans)	-	<i>As above, to avoid double counting</i>	
Health outcomes			
Mental health (mild)	3,738	Loss of a QALY for a person with a mild mental health issue + Cost of depression treatment	PSSRU / The economic and social impact of the British Gas Energy Trust report, 2015
Mental health (severe)	12,240	Loss of a QALY for a person with a severe mental health issue + Cost of admission and stay in mental health care home	PSSRU / British Gas Energy Trust report
Physical health	7,787	Loss of a QALY for a person with moderate pain	PSSRU / British Gas Energy Trust report
Housing outcomes			
Eviction	8,180	Cost of failed tenancy	New Economy Unit Cost Database
Homelessness	18,515	Homelessness	New Economy Unit Cost Database
Relationships			
Relationships with family or partner	96	12 Relate sessions at £8 per 15 minutes	DfE Family Savings Calculator
Relationships with friends	975	Monetary value of spending time with friends	Colombo and Stanca, 2013 ³⁰
Employment			
Securing part-time ³¹ employment	19,155	Increase in income + reduction in benefit claim + tax receipts	ONS (Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings), DWP, HMRC
Other outcomes			
Healthy eating	50	Dietitian consultation	NHS reference costs

Source: *Ecorys survey*

7.3.3 Additionality of the support

As shown in Section 5 of this report, beneficiaries' debts are often not limited to water arrears. In that sense, any water award was unlikely to cover all debts for a majority of people. To calculate the true benefit of the

³⁰ Colombo, E.; Stanca, L.; 2013. *Measuring the Monetary Value of Social Relations: A Hedonic Approach*. Milan: University of Milan. Available at SSRN: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2339923>

³¹ Part-time employment chosen due to the SROI principle to not over-claim, and because all qualitative comments regarding securing employment referred to part-time, not full-time work.

schemes, it was necessary to estimate how much of people’s total debt that the water awards and Further Assistance Payments helped to alleviate. The survey asked recipients to estimate this; the results are shown in Table 7.3. This confirms that debts are often not limited to water arrears, with only 7% of beneficiaries having their debts paid completely thanks to support from one of the schemes.

Calculating a weighted average, it can be found that, on average, beneficiaries had paid off 38% of their debt from all bills in total combined since getting support from a fund. The outcomes in the SROI will be multiplied by this measure, reflecting that the support did not necessarily entirely alleviate all debts.³²

Table 7.3 Think about all of your bills in total combined: in other words, everything that you owe or need to pay for. Now – roughly – how much of this (the debt from all of your bills in total combined) have you paid off since getting support from the fund?

Indicator	Mid-point of indicator	TOTAL
Almost none of my total debt has been paid off (10% or less approximately)	(5%)	22%
Less than half of my total debt has been paid off (between 11% and 45% approximately)	(27.5%)	25%
About half of my total debt has been paid off (between 46% and 54% approximately)	(50%)	11%
More than half of my total debt has been paid off (between 55% and 89% approximately)	(72.5%)	8%
Almost all of my total debt has been paid off (between 90% and 99% approximately)	(95%)	12%
All of my debt has been paid off (100%)	(100%)	7%
Don’t know/Prefer not to say		14%

Source: Ecorys survey

Only 12% of those surveyed believed that they had received any funding or support other than from one of the schemes under consideration to reduce any of their debts or bills. The outcomes in the SROI will be multiplied by 88% – 100% minus this measure of ‘attribution’ of the benefit of the schemes – reflecting that some beneficiaries were supported by other funds. This assumes that the problems of all those receiving other funding were improved solely as a result of this other funding, which may not be the case in practice. This means that the benefits of the schemes to beneficiaries that received other funding may be underestimated. Sources of other funding included from utility companies, Discretionary Housing Payments for rent arrears, support from Citizens Advice and other charities, and through a Debt Relief Order.

These findings suggest that the schemes were supporting a vast majority of beneficiaries who otherwise would not be supported at all. Indeed, the in-depth consultations found that very few beneficiaries knew who they could turn to other than the schemes which form the subject of this report. This does present a problem in that, if they fall into financial difficulty again, there is a question of what will happen to them, as they are not immediately eligible for a second payment from the scheme. More positively, some reported that they did not feel it was necessary for further support because they were already managing their finances adequately.

86% of those surveyed believed that their debt/bills would have got worse if they had not received support from the fund. As a result, their emotional wellbeing, mental health, housing situation and physical health may have worsened. The outcomes in the SROI will be multiplied by 86%, reflecting that 14% did not

³² This is important to consider in order to provide a conservative estimate of the value of the support, although this approach implicitly implies that the extent of outcomes are proportionate to the proportion of total debt alleviated.

believe that their debts would have got worse (which is used to approximate ‘deadweight’ or those whose finances would have improved anyway).

It is known from the survey comments and in-depth consultations that some beneficiaries experienced more severe hardship than others. Therefore, the individual outcomes experienced following the support have the potential to vary in terms of cost savings. For some outcomes, in Table 7.5 we have allocated a proxy for the percentage of eligible beneficiaries, which allows us to vary the percentage of beneficiaries that apply to, say, a mild or more severe outcome, or to reduce the number of beneficiaries for which a cost saving applies. This applies to housing, employment and healthy eating, and adheres to the SROI principle of conservative estimates.

These figures calculating the additionality of the support are outlined in Table 7.4.

Table 7.4 Additionality considerations

Additionality consideration	Weighting	Notes
Proxy for % of eligible beneficiaries	0-100%	Assumption based on survey comments and in-depth consultations on the severity of issues
% of debt alleviated as a result of the schemes	38%	Weighted average of how much survey respondents felt the support had alleviated the debt from all of their bills in total combined
Attribution to schemes	88%	100% minus the attribution rate
Accounting for deadweight	86%	100% minus the estimated deadweight (14%)

Source: Ecorys survey (all information apart from Proxy for % of eligible beneficiaries)

7.3.4 Combining the analysis of benefits

Combining all of the above considerations allows us to calculate the impact from all of the benefits, adjusted for the considerations for additionality. This analysis is shown in Table 7.5. The impact arising from each outcome group is summarised in Table 7.6. **The total benefits from the schemes are estimated to be £47,317,234 in 2015/16.** If the £9,343,871 of debt written off as a result of Further Assistance Payments to support individuals who could not afford to pay the fees to **instigate bankruptcy or Debt Relief Orders proceedings** was included, **total benefits from the schemes are estimated to be £56,661,105 in 2015/16.**³³

³³ Both scenarios are presented because it was considered that the debt written off makes a major contribution towards helping individuals (in addition to the major benefits from other support to the debtor that has already been considered in this analysis). However, in standard cost benefit analysis terms, the debt written off represents a benefit to the individuals involved but (ignoring distributional effects) is a financial transfer because there is an equal and opposite loss to the lender (though is clearly lower to the extent that the debt would never have actually been repaid). It was believed the extent to which payments of the fees would have happened anyway (deadweight) was negligible as Auriga Services considered themselves the lender of last resort.

Table 7.5 Analysis of the benefits of the schemes in 2015/16

Outcome	% of survey respondent-s reporting improvement	% of total number of individual beneficiaries	Proxy value (£, for one year)	Proxy for % of eligible beneficiaries	% of debt alleviated-d as a result of the scheme	Attribution to schemes	Accounting for dead-weight	IMPACT (£)
Financial outcomes								
Ability to pay water bills	82%	11,264	96	100%	38%	88%	86%	312,192
Ability to pay other essential bills	63%	8,568	- ³⁴	100%	38%	88%	86%	-
Ability to pay off other debts	34%	4,610	- ³⁵	100%	38%	88%	86%	-
Health outcomes								
Your mental health	60%	8,133	3,738	100%	38%	88%	86%	8,776,717
Your partner/family's mental health	36%	4,871	3,738	100%	38%	88%	86%	5,256,643
Your physical health	41%	5,654	7,787	100%	38%	88%	86%	12,710,561
Your partner/family's physical health	26%	3,566	7,787	100%	38%	88%	86%	8,017,431
Housing outcomes								
Eviction	44%	5,958	8,180	49%	38%	88%	86%	6,894,792
Homelessness	44%	5,958	18,515	1%	38%	88%	86%	318,494
Relationships								
With family or partner	47%	6,393	96	100%	38%	88%	86%	177,190
With friends	31%	4,262	975	100%	38%	88%	86%	1,199,725

³⁴ As above, to avoid double counting.

³⁵ As above, to avoid double counting.

Outcome	% of survey respondent-s reporting improvement	% of total number of individual beneficiaries	Proxy value (£, for one year)	Proxy for % of eligible beneficiaries	% of debt alleviated-d as a result of the scheme	Attribution to schemes	Accounting for dead-weight	IMPACT (£)
Partner or family's relationships with you/other family members	31%	4,262	- ³⁶	100%	38%	88%	86%	-
Partner or family's relationships with friends	18%	2,522	975	100%	38%	88%	86%	710,042
Employment								
Job or employment status	24%	3,218	19,155	10%	38%	88%	86%	1,779,775
Partner/family's job or employment status	15%	2,044	19,155	10%	38%	88%	86%	1,130,398
Other outcomes								
Healthy eating	34%	4,610	50	50%	38%	88%	86%	33,273
TOTAL BENEFITS (excluding debt written off following bankruptcy or Debt Relief Orders proceedings):								47,317,234
TOTAL BENEFITS (including debt written off following bankruptcy or Debt Relief Orders proceedings):								56,661,105

Source: Monitoring data (total beneficiaries), Ecorys survey (all other information)

³⁶ Relate sessions with partner already accounted for above.

Table 7.6 Benefits of the schemes in 2015/16 by outcome

Outcome	Impact (£)
FINANCIAL OUTCOMES	
Ability to pay water bills	312,192
Ability to pay other essential bills	-
Ability to pay off other debts	-
Financial outcomes in total	312,192
HEALTH OUTCOMES	
Your mental health	8,776,717
Your partner/family's mental health	5,256,643
Your physical health	12,710,561
Your partner/family's physical health	8,017,431
Health outcomes in total	34,761,352
HOUSING	
Eviction	6,894,792
Homelessness	318,494
Housing outcomes in total	7,213,286
RELATIONSHIPS	
With family or partner	177,190
With friends	1,199,725
Partner or family's relationships with you/other family members	-
Partner or family's relationships with friends	710,042
Relationships in total	2,086,957
EMPLOYMENT	
Job or employment status	1,779,775
Partner/family's job or employment status	1,130,398
Employment in total	2,910,173
OTHER OUTCOMES	
Healthy eating	33,273
TOTAL BENEFITS (excluding debt written off following bankruptcy or Debt Relief Orders proceedings)	47,317,234
Debt written off following bankruptcy or Debt Relief Orders proceedings	9,343,871
TOTAL BENEFITS (including debt written off following bankruptcy or Debt Relief Orders proceedings)	56,661,105

Source: Ecorys analysis

7.4 SROI Ratio

In summary:

- Total benefits from the schemes in 2015/16 are estimated to be £47,317,234, or £56,661,105 if debt written off following bankruptcy or Debt Relief Orders proceedings was included
- Total direct costs of the schemes (including both administration and the grants made) in 2015/16 are estimated to be £15,439,818.³⁷

Therefore:

- The added value (difference between costs and benefits) of the schemes in 2015/16 is estimated to be £31,877,416, or £41,221,287 if debt written off following bankruptcy or Debt Relief Orders proceedings was included
- The SROI ratio, or ratio of benefits to costs, is estimated to be £3.06.

This means that, for every £1 invested into the schemes, £3.06 of benefits is estimated to be generated.

If debt written off following bankruptcy or Debt Relief Orders proceedings was included, the SROI ratio rises to 3.67.

Under both scenarios, the benefits of the schemes are estimated to last for one year. If, in reality, some of the benefits persist for longer or shorter than is estimated (for example, employment), the amount of economic and social benefit may differ.

³⁷ This does not include indirect costs, which could not be valued but are likely to be small relative to the direct costs.

8.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 Conclusions

As shown in Section 7, the SROI ratios for the schemes are very positive. Creating over an estimated £3 of benefits for every £1 invested in the schemes overall, and around £50 million of benefits in total, highlights the substantial good arising from the schemes, and justifies the investment. Moreover, these figures are based on a number of conservative assumptions, in keeping with the principles of the SROI approach. If these were to be relaxed or extended, the value from the schemes could well rise further.

This study has given Auriga and the trustees of the four schemes an assessment of the outcomes of this work, as well as an insight into the vulnerability and problems facing some customers. The online survey revealed that more than half of beneficiaries thought that their concerns about money had affected their mental health, physical health, relationships with family or partner and job or employment status. Mental and physical health were thought to be particularly affected by money concerns. Comments suggested that the relationship between health and debt worked both ways, with health problems also leading to debt issues, often brought on following significant life events.

The main outcomes from the support, as defined in the survey, related to finances and financial capability, health, housing, relationships, employment and employability. There were also a number of other outcomes reported: for example, paying fees to instigate bankruptcy or Debt Relief Orders proceedings, or being able to eat more healthily when a fridge/freezer was provided to them.

Feedback on the application process and support provided to individuals was generally positive. For most people, the support that they received went beyond their expectations of the service. A number of beneficiaries have recommended the scheme that supported them to friends, family or others within their community. A number of individual beneficiaries also commented via the survey or in-depth consultations that their involvement with the scheme has “transformed” their view of their water company and/or water companies in general.

This research has important policy implications, especially at a period that is marked by cuts to charitable services. Through funding these schemes, the intervention and preventative work to stop debt getting out of control could make significant savings for the government, and this should be considered when allocating funding and protecting services.

8.2 Recommendations

Recommendations arising from the study are presented below:

- Distribute a survey to beneficiaries up to one year following receipt of their support, to allow ongoing monitoring of the outcomes of the schemes
- Extend data collection to allow for greater monitoring of outcomes arising from organisational beneficiaries: this will allow for the benefits from this work to be valued
- Review demographic information collected, so to confirm and provide evidence that support from the schemes is targeted at vulnerable customers most in need of support
- Consider SROI of the schemes on an ongoing basis, to target support most effectively.

Annex One: About Auriga Services

Annex One: About Auriga Services



Auriga is a not-for-profit company wholly owned by Severn Trent Water Charitable Trust Fund.

It has a mission to be 'changing lives every day' and since the Trust's inception in 1997 it has helped over 1.6 million people who are experiencing financial hardship.

The company aims to meet its vision of helping 2 million people by 2020.

Auriga acts as company secretary and manages (under delegated authority) the three trusts and the customer assistance fund covered in this report.

Passionate about providing outstanding customer service, Auriga has reduced its turnaround time to process applications for assistance to below 10 days, and is on course to deliver further process improvements.

The company also holds the ISO 9001 Quality Management System accreditation.

The company employs over 60 people and has grown by 40% in the last two years. In addition to managing the major trust funds, the company works for three of the big six power utilities, several local authorities, the NHS and charitable organisations across the UK.

As well as fund management, Auriga delivers money and debt advice, welfare benefits support, emergency payments and income maximisation services by phone, email, at home and in outreach centres. Auriga realises the income and grants for individuals by completing and submitting application forms, preparing appeals and appearing in tribunals.

The company was awarded Business of the Year in 2017 by Sutton Coldfield Chamber of Commerce.

Website: www.aurigaservices.co.uk

Annex Two: Data Analysis of Support to Individuals

Annex Two: Data Analysis of Support to Individuals

Individual beneficiaries, by fund		
Fund	Number of applications ³⁸	
Thames Water Customer Assistance Fund	5204	38%
United Utilities Trust Fund	4747	35%
Severn Trent Trust Fund	2582	19%
Thames Water Trust Fund	1123	8%
	13656	

Age		
Age	Total	
	Count	%
0-15	6	0%
16-24	648	5%
25-34	2327	18%
35-44	3012	23%
45-54	3886	30%
55-64	2491	19%
65-74	522	4%
75-84	147	1%
85+	24	<1%
Cumulative Total	13063	100%

**Age brackets derived from ONS Harmonised Principle 3 Source: ONS. 2015. Harmonised Concepts and Question for Social Data Sources: Primary Principles (Demographic Information, Household Composition and Relationships). ONS: UK*

Housing tenure		
Housing Tenure	Total	
	Count	%
Housing Association	7101	55%
Private Landlord	2380	18%
Council/LA	2230	17%
Owner	1059	8%
Other	237	2%
Cumulative Total	13007	100%

³⁸ Please note that 'Total' or 'Cumulative total' figures may differ from these figures in subsequent tables where data has not been completed.

Average number of children per applicant

Number of children	Total	
	Count	%
0	8331	61%
1	2598	19%
2	1684	12%
3	683	5%
4	248	2%
5	86	1%
6	20	<1%
7	5	<1%
8	1	<1%
Cumulative Total	13656	100%
Average number of children per applicant		
	0.7	

Average number of children per applicant (that has children)

Number of children	Total	
	Count	%
1	2598	49%
2	1684	32%
3	683	13%
4	248	5%
5	86	2%
6	20	<1%
7	5	<1%
8	1	<1%
Cumulative Total	5325	100%
Average number of children per applicant (that has children)		
	1.8	

Average number of adults

Number of adults	Total	
	Count	%
1	10918	80%
2	1965	14%
3	637	5%
4	102	1%
5	22	<1%
6	7	<1%
7	1	<1%
8	2	<1%
10	1	<1%
Cumulative Total	13655	100%
Average number of adults	1.3	

Households with a disabled person

Households with a disabled person	Total	
	Count	%
No	11303	83%
Yes	2353	17%
Cumulative Total	13656	100%

Help required

Type of help	Total				
	No		Yes		Total
	Count	%	Count	%	
Current Charges:	10859	80%	2797	20%	13656
Other Arrears:	12629	92%	1027	8%	13656
Other Costs:	11917	87%	1739	13%	13656
Water Arrears:	1775	13%	11881	87%	13656

Total water debt outstanding		
Total outstanding (£)	Total	
	Count	%
0 (No figure recorded)	1713	13%
0.01-499.99	4669	34%
500-999.99	3685	27%
1000-1499.99	1615	12%
1500-1999.99	816	6%
2000-2499.99	469	3%
2500-2999.99	303	2%
3000-3499.99	165	1%
3500-3999.99	84	1%
4000-4499.99	44	<1%
4500-4999.99	23	<1%
5000+	41	0%
	13627	100%

Total income		
Total Income	Total	
	Count	%
0	126	1%
0.01-249.99	9112	67%
250-499.99	4017	29%
500-749.99	381	3%
750-999.99	18	<1%
1000+	2	<1%
Cumulative Total	13656	100%

Ethnicity		
Ethnicity	Total	
	Count	%
Asian Bangladeshi	28	<1%
Asian Indian	61	1%
Asian Other	48	1%
Asian Pakistani	129	2%
Black African	214	3%
Black Caribbean	174	2%
Black Other	48	1%
Chinese	2	<1%
Chinese Other	1	<1%
Mixed Other	29	<1%
Mixed White & Asian	22	<1%
Mixed White & Black African	36	<1%
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	90	1%
Not Specified	1041	14%
Other	54	1%
White British	5516	72%
White Irish	57	1%
White Not Specified	2	<1%
White Other	104	1%
Cumulative Total	7656	100%

How heard		
How heard	Total	
	Count	%
Water Company Representative	1809	25%
Citizens Advice Bureau	1459	20%
Housing Association	1049	14%
Money Advice Agency	668	9%
Internet	321	4%
Family / Friends / Neighbours	280	4%
Local Government Agencies	154	2%
Promotional Material	80	1%
Fuel Suppliers	25	<1%
Neighbourhood Office	8	<1%
Affinity Water Representative	5	<1%
Newspaper	4	<1%
Radio / Television	1	<1%
Support Worker	583	8%
Other	892	12%

Further Assistance Payment award

Further Assistance Payment award amount (£)	Total	
	Count	%
0	1204	9%
0.01-249.99	9902	73%
250-499.99	1995	15%
500-749.99	366	3%
750-999.99	61	<1%
1000+	128	1%
Total	13656	100%

Water award

Water award amount (£)	Total	
	Count	%
0	44	<1%
0.01-249.99	2426	18%
250-499.99	4334	32%
500-749.99	2160	16%
750-999.99	1291	9%
1000+	3401	25%
Total	13656	100%

Total awards

Total awards amount (£)	Total	
	Count	%
0.01-999.99	9403	69%
1000-1999.99	2895	21%
2000-2999.99	899	7%
3000-3999.99	325	2%
4000-4999.99	90	1%
5000+	43	<1%
Total	13655	100%

Annex Three: Survey Tables

Annex Three: Survey Tables

Q1: Why did you apply to the fund?	
	TOTAL
Base: All Respondents	314
I could not afford to pay my water bill or water debt	264 84%
I could not afford to pay other essential bills or debts (for example, gas, electricity, telephone, or council tax bills)	114 36%
I could not afford essential household items (for example, a cooker, washing machine, fridge or bed)	85 27%
I could not afford rent or mortgage payments or debts	40 13%
I needed advice or help on managing money and debt	31 10%
I could not afford a credit card, bank or overdraft charges, bank or payday lender loan repayments or debts	29 9%
Other reason (please write here what the reason was):	15 5%
Don't know/Prefer not to say	6 2%

Q2: Thinking about before you received support from the fund, did your concerns about money have any impact on the following areas of your life? (SUMMARY of 'Yes')	
	TOTAL
Base: All Respondents	314
Mental health (including levels of stress, anxiety or depression)	259 82%
Physical health	228 73%
Relationships with family or partner	179 57%
Job or employment status	162 52%
Relationship with friends	132 42%

Q3: Thinking about before you received support from the fund, did your concerns about money having any impact on the following areas of your partner's and/or family's life? (SUMMARY of 'Yes')

	TOTAL
Base: All Respondents	314
Mental health (including levels of stress, anxiety or depression)	220 70%
Physical health	182 58%
Relationship with you or other family members	173 55%
Relationship with friends	125 40%
Job or employment status	124 39%

Q4: What did the fund support you with?

	TOTAL
Base: All Respondents	314
Water bills or water debt	291 93%
Providing essential household items (for example, a cooker, washing machine, fridge or bed)	69 22%
Other essential bills or debts (for example, gas, electricity, telephone or council tax)	13 4%
Something else (such as bankruptcy fees or welfare benefit/debt advice) (please write here what support was provided or paid)	11 4%
Rent or mortgage payments or debts	5 2%

Q5: Did the fund provide you with essential household items (for example, a cooker, washing machine, fridge or bed)?

	TOTAL
Base: All Respondents	314
Yes	74 24%
No	240 76%

Q7: Has the support you have received from the fund helped your ability to pay your water bills?

	TOTAL
Base: All Respondents	314
Yes	259 82%
No	31 10%
Don't know/Prefer not to say	24 8%

Q8: Has the support you have received from the fund helped your housing situation (for example, fear of eviction, being able to pay for your rent or mortgage)?

	TOTAL
Base: All Respondents	314
Yes	137 44%
No	145 46%
Don't know/Prefer not to say	32 10%

Q9: Has the support you have received from the fund helped your ability to pay other essential bills (for example, gas, electricity, telephone or council tax)?

	TOTAL
Base: All Respondents	314
Yes	197 63%
No	96 31%
Don't know/Prefer not to say	21 7%

Q10: Has the support you received from the fund helped you to start paying off any other debts (for example, credit cards, bank or overdraft charges, bank or payday lender loans)?

	TOTAL
Base: All Respondents	314
Yes	106 34%
No	173 55%
Don't know/Prefer not to say	35 11%

Q11: Think about all of your bills in total combined: in other words, everything that you owe or need to pay for. Now – roughly – how much of this (the debt from all of your bills in total combined) have you paid off since getting support from the fund?

	TOTAL
Base: All Respondents	314
Almost none of my total debt has been paid off (10% or less approximately)	70 22%
Less than half of my total debt has been paid off (between 11% and 45% approximately)	80 25%
About half of my total debt has been paid off (between 46% and 54% approximately)	36 11%
More than half of my total debt has been paid off (between 55% and 89% approximately)	26 8%
Almost all of my total debt has been paid off (between 90% and 99% approximately)	37 12%
All of my debt has been paid off (100%)	22 7%
Don't know/Prefer not to say	43 14%

Q12_1: Physical health - Have any of these areas of your life improved since you received support from the fund?

	TOTAL
Base: All Respondents	314
Improved	130 41%
No difference	141 45%
Got worse	25 8%
Don't know/ Prefer not to say	18 6%

Q12_2: Mental health (including levels of stress, anxiety or depression) - Have any of these areas of your life improved since you received support from the fund?

	TOTAL
Base: All Respondents	314
Improved	187 60%
No difference	83 26%
Got worse	23 7%
Don't know/ Prefer not to say	21 7%

Q12_3: Relationships with family or partner - Have any of these areas of your life improved since you received support from the fund?

	TOTAL
Base: All Respondents	314
Improved	147 47%
No difference	122 39%
Got worse	8 3%
Don't know/ Prefer not to say	37 12%

Q12_4: Relationships with friends - Have any of these areas of your life improved since you received support from the fund?

	TOTAL
Base: All Respondents	314
Improved	98
	31%
No difference	161
	51%
Got worse	10
	3%
Don't know/ Prefer not to say	45
	14%

Q12_5: Job or employment status - Have any of these areas of your life improved since you received support from the fund?

	TOTAL
Base: All Respondents	314
Improved	74
	24%
No difference	178
	57%
Got worse	15
	5%
Don't know/ Prefer not to say	47
	15%

Q13_1: Physical health - If applicable, have any of these areas of your partner's and/or family's life changed since having support from the fund?

	TOTAL
Base: All Respondents	314
Improved	82 26%
No difference	117 37%
Got worse	13 4%
Don't know/ Prefer not to say	19 6%
Not applicable (I do not have a partner or family)	83 26%

Q13_2: Mental health (including levels of stress, anxiety or depression) - If applicable, have any of these areas of your partner's and/or family's life changed since having support from the fund?

	TOTAL
Base: All Respondents	314
Improved	112 36%
No difference	90 29%
Got worse	11 4%
Don't know/ Prefer not to say	21 7%
Not applicable (I do not have a partner or family)	80 25%

Q13_3: Relationships with you or other family members - If applicable, have any of these areas of your partner's and/or family's life changed since having support from the fund?

	TOTAL
Base: All Respondents	314
Improved	98 31%
No difference	102 32%
Got worse	5 2%
Don't know/ Prefer not to say	24 8%
Not applicable (I do not have a partner or family)	85 27%

Q13_4: Relationships with friends - If applicable, have any of these areas of your partner's and/or family's life changed since having support from the fund?

	TOTAL
Base: All Respondents	314
Improved	58 18%
No difference	134 43%
Got worse	3 1%
Don't know/ Prefer not to say	27 9%
Not applicable (I do not have a partner or family)	92 29%

Q13_5: Job or employment status - If applicable, have any of these areas of your partner's and/or family's life changed since having support from the fund?

	TOTAL
Base: All Respondents	314
Improved	47 15%
No difference	142 45%
Got worse	6 2%
Don't know/ Prefer not to say	25 8%
Not applicable (I do not have a partner or family)	94 30%

Q14: Has anything else in your life improved since getting support from the fund?

	TOTAL
Base: All Respondents	314
Yes	106 34%
No	131 42%
Don't know/Prefer not to say	77 25%

Q15: After receiving support from the fund, how do you feel about managing your bills in the future?

	TOTAL
Base: All Respondents	314
Much more confident	103 33%
A little more confident	134 43%
About the same	52 17%
A little less confident	11 4%
Much less confident	4 1%
Don't know/Prefer not to say	10 3%
NET: More confident	237 75%
NET: Less confident	15 5%

Q17: Did you receive any funding or support other than the fund to reduce any of your debts or bills?

	TOTAL
Base: All Respondents	314
Yes (please write here what this other funding or support has been):	38 12%
No	257 82%
Don't know/Prefer not to say	19 6%

Q18: If you had not received support from the fund, what do you think would have happened to your total debt or bills?

	TOTAL
Base: All Respondents	314
My debt or bills would have got worse	271 86%
My debt or bills would have stayed about the same	17 5%
My debt or bills would have got better	6 2%
Don't know/Prefer not to say	20 6%



Auriga Services Ltd is the independent not-for-profit company that manages and administrates the three water companies' Trusts and the customer assistance scheme. In partnership with the trustees of each Trust Fund, in 2016 Auriga commissioned Ecorys to undertake a Social Return on Investment analysis to quantify the social value created by the collective investment in the schemes, in providing grants and assistance to vulnerable customers in Great Britain.



Based on a full report by James Whitley, Ecorys, June 2017. Ecorys is an international company providing research, consultancy and management services. They specialise in economic, social and spatial development and aim to deliver a real benefit to society through the work that they do.

See the full report at www.aurigaservices.co.uk/SROI
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