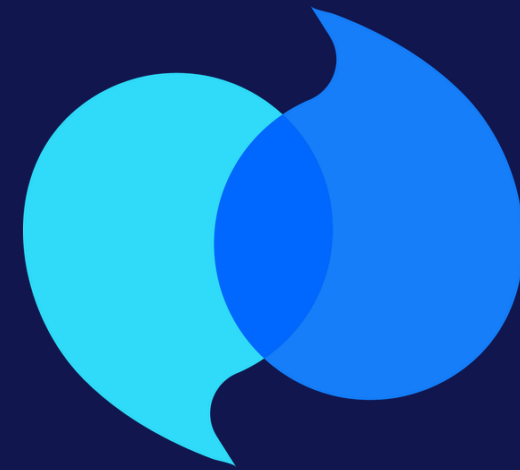


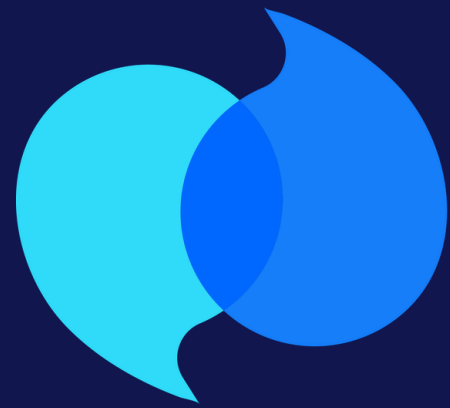


Future Water
Association

Informing, Innovating, Influencing

They can't read it, **so**
why write it?

16 June 2026



**Future Water
Association**
Informing, Innovating, Influencing

The Sobering Reality.

9

Years
Old

The Average UK Reading Age

The benchmark standard for public materials is shockingly lower than standard utility documents assume.

This is a consistent national metric reconfirmed by the NHS, King's College London, and the National Literacy Trust. To ensure universal accessibility, the NHS now specifically designs its public health leaflets for a Year 5 reading level.

Government Data: Literacy Levels

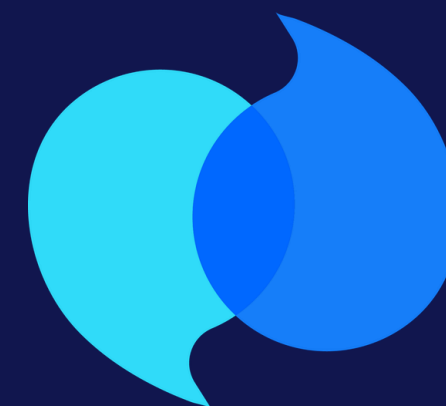
Survey of Adult Skills 2023

The official Survey of Adult Skills 2023 paints a stark reality of adult capabilities across England.

20% of adults (16–65) have low basic literacy or numeracy proficiency, performing at Level 1 or below.

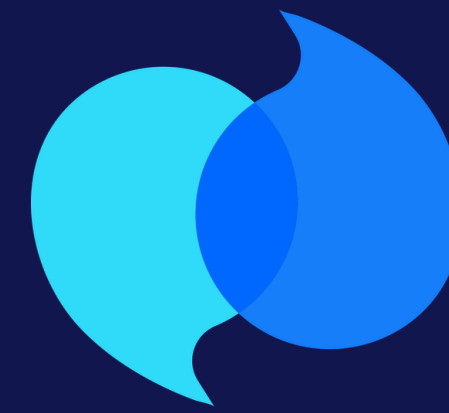
This equates to roughly 8.5 million adults.

The report shows adult literacy progress has remained stagnant over the last decade, highlighting a growing barrier.



**Future Water
Association**
Informing, Innovating, Influencing

The Empathy Gap in Utilities



**Future Water
Association**
Informing, Innovating, Influencing



Exclusion by Complexity

Whenever we publish standard drought notices, complex billing adjustments, or sustainability reports, we are active gatekeepers of essential resources.

If customers cannot comprehend our explanations because they are buried in institutional jargon, we erode public trust. Real, lasting trust requires a foundation of absolute clarity and accessibility.

Meeting People Where They Are

The TikTok Revolution

Utility companies adopting modern short-form video platforms like TikTok represents a sophisticated strategy for visual stakeholder engagement

Short-form video demands radical simplicity. It shifts the burden away from heavy, inaccessible PDFs and toward intuitive, visually rich storytelling that crosses demographic lines.



A New Communication Standard

-  **The "Plain English" Test**
We must systematically strip out the crutch of complex industry jargon. If a term resides exclusively inside our industry bubble, it does not belong in customer letters.
-  **Visual-First Messaging**
If we cannot communicate a core concept with a clean diagram or a 30-second video, we likely do not understand the core operational issue well enough ourselves.
-  **Radical Empathy**
We must accept a foundational responsibility as public services: the burden of clear understanding is always on the sender, never the receiver.

**What's
coming up at
Future
Water?**



Leakage & Metering Conference

7 & 8 July, Severn Trent

Book now

love every drop
anglianwater



Horizon Water
Infrastructure

**Future Water Awards
& 40th Anniversary**

**What's
coming up at
Future
Water?**



**24TH
09
2026**



6–9pm

One Great George Street, London

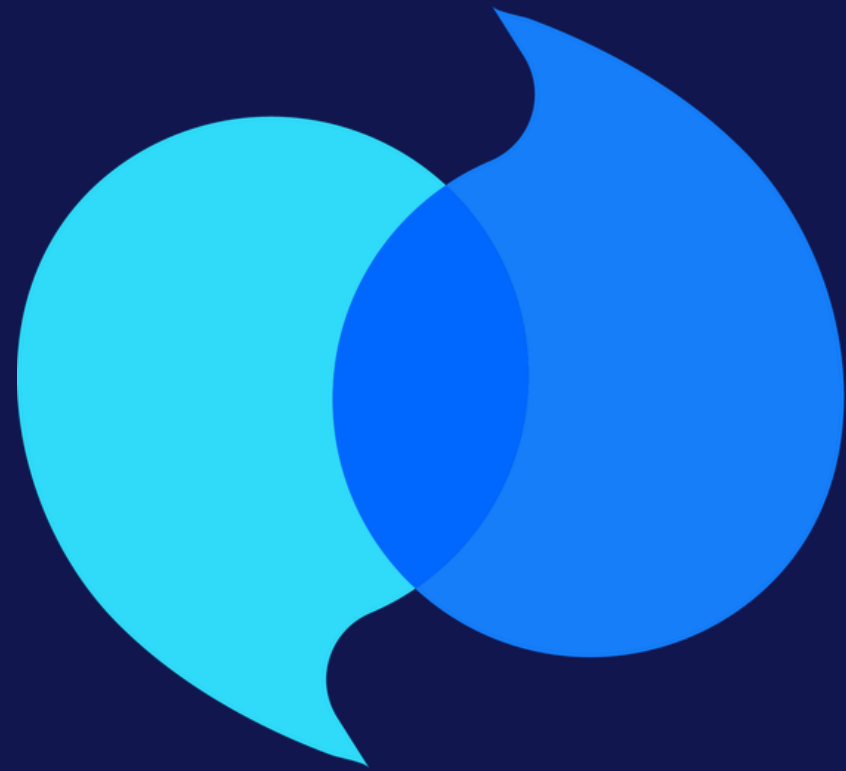
**What's
coming up at
Future
Water?**



**Future Water
Association**
Informing, Innovating, Influencing

Networks November
Your input starts here





Future Water Association

Informing, Innovating, Influencing