



Code of practice **Household customers**

2017–18

Contents

Preface – A message from our Chief Executive

| | | |
|-----|---|----|
| 1. | Introduction | 4 |
| 2. | Our company | 6 |
| 3. | Drinking water, pipework responsibility and leakage | 9 |
| 4. | Disposal of wastewater | 20 |
| 5. | Our care for the environment | 26 |
| 6. | Water efficiency plan and initiatives | 27 |
| 7. | Our metering programme | 29 |
| 8. | Options when a meter can't be fitted | 30 |
| 9. | Water meters – additional information | 31 |
| 10. | Payment of charges | 32 |
| 11. | Customers who need financial assistance | 41 |
| 12. | Customers with individual needs | 45 |
| 13. | Complaints | 46 |
| 14. | Guaranteed standards | 49 |
| 15. | Arbitration | 55 |
| 16. | Disputes determined by Ofwat | 56 |
| 17. | Office opening hours | 58 |
| 18. | General | 59 |

A message from our Chief Executive

We're proud to provide essential water and wastewater services to 4.6 million customers across Kent, Sussex, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. This means sending out more than two million bills each year, operating more than 3,000 treatment works and pumping stations, and maintaining a vast network of underground water mains and sewers.

Every time we interact with you, we want you to be satisfied with the service we provide. We don't always get it right, but if there's a problem, we'll do our best to get it sorted out as soon as possible.

Our Code of Practice sets out the standards of service you should expect from us, along with details of how to make a claim, should something go wrong. It also includes useful contact information, how to contact us if you have problems with your water supply, details of pipe ownership and what to do if you experience a leak or even a flooding incident.

There's additional information about our charges; whether you own a home, you're renting or you're the landlord. We've broken down how they're calculated, based on what type of account you hold with us, for example, metered or unmetered, water only or wastewater only. Details of our various payment schemes and tariffs are also clearly described.

We've also included information about how to be more water efficient, prevent blockages from causing bad smells and flooding in your home, and tips on how to deal with hard water and a number of home plumbing issues.

This Code of Practice is updated every year so it's the best place to find answers to all your questions about Southern Water, our services and your rights as our customer. I hope you'll find this information useful and keep it for your reference.

Ian McAulay
Chief Executive Officer

This Code of Practice is specifically for household customers.

1.1 Introduction

Southern Water Services Limited is a water and wastewater services provider licensed under the Water Industry Act 1991. We're a regulated business, which protects your interests and strengthens your rights as a customer:

How does this happen?

- Our licence, issued by the government, governs the way we operate our business and also controls the extent to which we can vary our charges each year.
- The government's Drinking Water Inspectorate ensures we meet standards set by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) for drinking water quality.
- The Environment Agency regulates how much water we can abstract from rivers, reservoirs and underground sources. It also specifies the quantity and quality of effluent we can discharge to rivers and the sea.
- The government appointed independent Water Services Regulation Authority (WSRA), also known as Ofwat, ensures that customers' interests are protected and we comply with our licence by:
 - controlling the overall changes we can make to our charges
 - approving the standards of service we must provide
 - providing guidelines for information we provide to customers.

This Code of Practice is a requirement of condition G of our licence. It's produced in line with Ofwat guidelines. We also consult with the Consumer Council for Water (CCWater) on this document.

CCWater is the customer watchdog and it represents customers of water and sewerage companies in England and Wales. CCWater works to ensure that our customers are at the heart of everything we do.

1.2 Our promises to household customers

We're committed to providing excellent service. In 2015, at the start of our five-year price review period, we had conversations with more than 34,000 of our customers.

This feedback helped us define six key priorities and 26 specific promises, with measurable outcomes and clear performance targets for our teams to work towards. By 2020 we'll have spent more than £3 billion over a five-year period improving water and wastewater services – with £1.8 billion invested in new or improved assets alone – that's equivalent to £1,000 for every property in our region. Over the same period, average bills will fall by 8% before inflation.

Our promises to you:

- Reduction in bill queries by 2020
- Customers provided with better information about what we do, why we do it, what it costs and how we are providing value for money
- Efficiency savings made during 2015 to 2020 to help keep bills as low as possible

- Customers in genuine financial hardship provided with improved support
- Direct compensation paid where we let you down
- Quick and effective resolution of your queries
- Improved service to you and your community
- No restrictions on water use, unless there are at least two dry winters in a row
- Reduce leakage by 2020
- No increase in the average time you are without water because of a burst water main, for example
- Aim for 100% compliance with drinking water quality standards
- No increase in the number of households suffering from persistent low water pressure
- Help reduce the effect of hard water in homes
- No increase in the number of blockages in our sewer network
- Significant reduction in sewer flooding inside your homes by 2020
- No increase in the number of incidents of sewer flooding affecting outside areas
- Reduction in complaints about smells from our wastewater treatment works and pumping stations by 2020
- No 'serious pollution incidents' affecting local rivers, streams and beaches caused by our operations by 2020
- Aim for 100% compliance by our wastewater treatment works within required standards
- Increase the number of beaches with 'excellent' bathing water quality by 2020
- Maintain the proportion of renewable energy we use
- Reduce the amount of water we take from the environment, despite predicted population growth of 4%
- 10% reduction in average water use by 2020 with better advice on saving water, energy and money
- Improved advice on how to prevent blocked drains to help reduce blockages.

2 Our company

2.1 Your water and wastewater services company

We provide drinking water and wastewater services to customers in Kent, Sussex, Hampshire, the Isle of Wight and small parts of Wiltshire, Berkshire and Surrey.

Visit southernwater.co.uk/your-area and enter your postcode to find out whether you're a Southern Water customer.

You may receive one or both services from us. If a service is provided by another water company, you'll receive a separate bill from them in most instances unless we have a joint billing arrangement.

The addresses and telephone numbers of other water companies are given on their bills. Direct links to all other water companies are available at southernwater.co.uk/area-of-operation.

2.2 How you can contact us

If you have an enquiry or complaint about your water service, wastewater service or your bill, contact our Customer Service team:

Online

You can now register for an online account with us at southernwater.co.uk. With just a few clicks you'll be able to:

- pay your bill
- change your account details
- check your usage history
- set up a Direct Debit
- submit a meter-reading and much more.

There's also a Live Chat option at southernwater.co.uk, available during office hours Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm.

By phone

If you have a billing question, call us on **0330 303 0277** – Monday to Friday from 8am to 7pm and Saturday 8.30am to 2pm.

We have a Minicom service (for the deaf or hard of hearing): **0330 303 1265** – Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm.

There's also an automated line: **0330 303 1263**, available 24-hours a day, where you can pay your bill, tell us you're moving house, apply for a Direct Debit or a payment card.

If you're struggling to pay your bill, we're here to help and have a range of schemes and tariffs available for those in financial difficulty. Call us on **Freephone** on **0800 027 0363** – Monday to Friday, 8am to 7pm and Saturday, 9am to 1pm.



Emergencies

If there's a problem with your water supply or wastewater services, you can call us 24-hours-a-day on **0330 303 0368**

In writing

Southern Water, PO Box 41, Worthing, West Sussex BN13 3NZ

By fax

Contact us on **0203 047 9147**

By email

If you have a question about your bill, complete the form at southernwater.co.uk/feedback.

For water supply and wastewater service questions, complete the form at southernwater.co.uk/i-have-an-enquiry.

General contact information

If you're moving house and have a water meter, please provide us with a meter reading so we can organise your final bill or give us at least two working days' advance notice so we can read the meter for you.

If you have a question or complaint about your account, please quote your customer number, which is shown at the top of each bill. If we're not responsible, we'll advise you where you can get further help.

If we have a major operational incident that's likely to affect you by disrupting your water services, we'll tell you about it: on our website, via an update on our Twitter account, through loudspeaker vans, local radio, TV, by text or in writing, whichever is quickest and most appropriate at the time.

2.3 Our rights of entry

Under certain circumstances we have the right to enter properties and land. This is usually so that we can investigate compliance with the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 (WSR 1999) or take samples to check for water quality.

We'll always call at a reasonable time and give you appropriate notice. We'll contact you 24 hours before an investigation of regulatory compliance or in the case of monitoring water quality. In all other cases we'll give seven days' notice. If we've not given you appropriate notice, you can refuse entry, unless there's an emergency.

2.4 Crime prevention

All of our employees carry photo identity cards, branded with our logo, to confirm they're genuine.

Stop before you answer the door and be **AWARE**:

- Attach your door chain before opening the door to strangers.
- Water company employees always carry identification.

- A company uniform and vehicle displaying a logo are things to look out for.
- Remember, if you're unsure, keep them out and call us on: **0330 303 0368** (24 hours) or the local police.
- Employees of Southern Water will always be happy to wait.

For anyone who feels vulnerable or nervous of callers we have a password scheme, details of which are available from our Customer Service Centre on: **0330 303 0277**.

Bogus callers

Southern Water joined forces with water companies across the UK, police and the government to raise national awareness of these callous conmen who prey on the elderly and vulnerable.

The national *Knock knock, who's there? Be stranger aware!* campaign, which is supported by the Home Office, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), Water UK and the Consumer Council for Water (CCWater), aims to raise national awareness among all age groups to help prevent this distressing crime.

3 Drinking water, pipework, responsibility and leakage

3.1 Water quality

All water we supply is of high quality. The chemical and bacteriological quality of water is specified in regulations issued by the Secretary of State, based on European Union Directives. We must supply water that complies with these regulations.

3.2 Water quality records

We must regularly sample and test the water we supply to you to comply with these regulations. If we get a complaint and take a sample of your tap water, we'll always give you details of our analysis and the required water quality standards.

You can see a water quality report for your area at: southernwater.co.uk/how-hard-is-your-water where you can click on our interactive map. Alternatively, you can request a copy by contacting our Customer Service Centre on **0330 303 0368** (or see **Section 2.2** for our full contact details).

The Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) carries out a rigorous audit of our sampling and test records each year. It also checks we've responded properly to customers' complaints on water quality. More information about the DWI is available at: dwi.gov.uk.

3.3 Quality problems with your water supply

Please note that the following circumstances are exceptional:

If we have any concerns over the quality of water supplied, we may ask you to boil your water before using it. In very rare circumstances we may advise you not to drink the water. If this becomes necessary, we'll notify you by post or through the local media and arrange for an alternative water supply to be made available until the problem has been dealt with.

If you believe your water has become unfit to drink, contact us immediately, at any time, on **0330 303 0368**. Don't drink the water until you've spoken to us.

See **Section 14.3** for our Guaranteed Standards of service relating to Water Quality.

3.4 Source of water

We abstract nearly 70% of water from underground sources; the remaining 30% is taken from above ground sources, such as rivers or reservoirs.

3.5 Quantity

We're required to provide a continuous supply of water for your domestic needs – drinking, washing, cooking, heating and sanitation – and for outside use, such as watering the garden and washing the car. We aim to ensure that, in normal circumstances, you may use a hosepipe if you wish. See below for information on temporary water use restrictions during times of drought.

We operate in an area that's seriously water-stressed. To help conserve available water supplies, we've installed a water meter at most household properties in our water supply area. An important part of this metering programme has been a drive to make customers aware of the importance of using water wisely and the impact this can have on their metered bills.

In line with our metering policy, we'll be discontinuing the old unmetered basis of charge, relating to the former rateable value of the property shown in the valuation list in 1990.

Owing to the individual supply arrangements, it's not been possible to fit a meter at every property. In these cases, we'll provide an assessed metered charge based on the number of bedrooms in your property.

For further information, call us on **0330 303 1262**.

3.6 Water restrictions

Our water supply sources are designed to standards that provide reliable supplies to meet normal demand under drought conditions which might only occur once in 50 years. To provide all the assets we'd need to meet greater demand would cost more and the extra capacity would sit idle most of the time.

During prolonged drought we may have to restrict use of hosepipes for specific activities (as described in **Section 14.6**) through the imposition of temporary use bans to conserve water supplies so that everyone can continue to receive enough for essential purposes. You may still water your garden using watering cans and buckets. If we do have to introduce temporary use bans, this will apply to all household customers within the affected water resource area and include those who have a water meter.

We aim to ensure that these are kept to a minimum by reducing leakage from the distribution system and developing new sources to meet the growth in demand. We've also invested heavily in large water transfer pipelines linking our supply areas so water can be moved around. Where we need to impose restrictions, we'll ensure all affected customers are informed about when and how restrictions will be applied and when they'll be lifted.

3.7 Supply interruptions

Sometimes we have to interrupt the water supply to carry out essential maintenance work to our mains. Normally, we'll always try to let you know when your water will be cut off and when it will be restored. Occasionally, in an emergency, this may not be possible. If you find your water has been interrupted, visit southernwater.co.uk/incident-map for updates via our incident map on the homepage or call **0330 303 0368** for further information. If the interruption lasts for more than 24 hours we're required to provide an alternative water supply (See our guaranteed standards for interruptions in **Section 14**).

As part of our commitment to reduce wastage from the distribution system we carry out leakage checks at night. If we're making checks in your area, your supply may be interrupted for up to 45 minutes between 1am and 4am. Because the disruption is slight, we do not normally warn customers in advance. However, if you regularly require a water supply between these hours and you believe an interruption would cause you problems, please contact our Customer Service Centre on **0330 303 0368**.

3.8 Water pressure

We must supply water at a pressure that ensures it reaches the top of every building, except where this is greater than the height to which it will flow by gravity from our service reservoir.

To achieve this, we aim to supply water at the stop tap on the boundary of your property at a minimum pressure of 10 metres head. This gives a minimum flow from a ground-floor tap of nine litres per minute, equivalent to filling a one-gallon bucket in 30 seconds.

In practice we aim to do better than this. Sometimes lower pressure can occur, but this should not be for more than one hour in 24. If the pressure falls below seven metres static head for more than one hour, on more than one occasion in any 28-day period, we'll pay £25 under the Guaranteed Standards Scheme. See **Section 14** for further details.

Pressure and flow are affected by several factors:

- The height of your property in relation to our water main and our service reservoir.
- The condition of your private supply pipe.
- If the stop tap is not turned on sufficiently.
- Whether your property shares a supply pipe with any other property.
- Peak demand conditions.

If you think your water pressure is too low, contact our Customer Service Centre on **0330 303 0368**. We'll investigate the cause free of charge and advise what action can be taken.

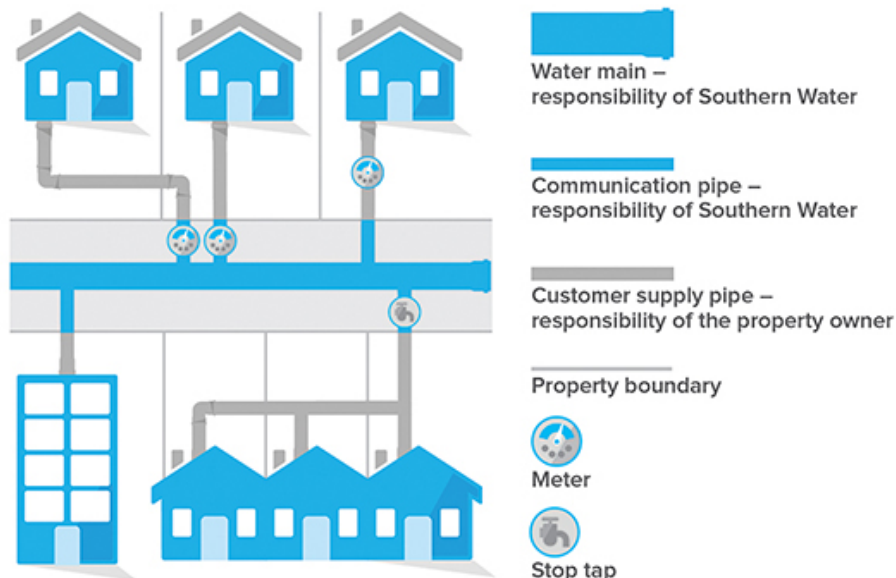
3.9 Pipe ownership and responsibilities

We own and maintain the water mains that carry water to homes and businesses. Your property is connected to our water main by a service pipe. Responsibility for this underground pipe is split between you and us **as shown in the diagram below**.

You're legally responsible for the section of pipe from the boundary of the public highway to your property – this is called the supply pipe. You may share the supply pipe with other people and this means you also share responsibility for leaks with any neighbours supplied by the same pipe.

We're responsible for the section between the water main and the boundary of your property – frequently the front garden wall or fence. This is called the communication pipe and usually incorporates our stop tap box, which is located in the pavement or verge. This stop tap is used for turning off the mains water supply. Often this is where a water meter may be located.

It's your responsibility to maintain your supply pipe in good order, even when it runs under other properties before reaching yours. Most properties have a separate stop tap where the supply pipe enters the building. You're advised to locate and operate this stop tap to ensure it can be shut in an emergency.



This is particularly important in advance

of any planned works you are undertaking inside your property (eg a bathroom or kitchen replacement). An approved plumber should check this for you and be competent to repair or replace as required. If we need to send a member of our team to check your external stop tap and carry out follow-on work to make your external stop tap operable, this may delay your planned work. See **Section 3.11** for how we may be able to help you.

Unfortunately, not all supply arrangements are this simple. You may share a communication pipe with one or more of your neighbours. This length of pipe is our responsibility, but the supply pipes connected to it are the responsibility of the customers sharing the supply.

Sometimes customers find shared supplies inadequate. We'll lay a separate communication pipe free of charge from our main to the street boundary where the following conditions apply:

- Where the supply fails to meet the flow and pressure criteria.
- Where lead is present.
- Where the supply is being compromised by excessive leaks.

In all cases the extent of our work will be limited to the provision of a separate communication pipe and/or boundary box. You'll be required to separate all private pipework at your cost.

If you wish to take advantage of this offer call us on **0330 303 0368**.

We prefer there to be a separate supply pipe to each individual property. We may have to ask you to provide a separate supply pipe in the following circumstances:

- If the shared supply pipe has become so defective or insufficient as to need replacement.
- If new or converted properties are connected to it.
- If there's been interference with a customer's supply.
- If charges are outstanding.

In these cases, you'll need to provide the separate supply pipe yourself or bear the cost of the work undertaken. If you dispute our requirement for the supply pipe to be separated, the matter can be referred to Ofwat for determination (see **Section 16** for details).

If you're buying a property, make sure your solicitor checks the arrangements for the water supply and charges, particularly if the property is jointly supplied or the pipe crosses someone else's property. New properties that we supply should have a separate service pipe, even if they are flats formed from the conversion of an existing building.

3.10 Pipe-laying

We may want to lay or work on a pipe in land that you own or occupy. We've statutory powers to do this and have rights of entry to the land to lay and maintain the pipe. We'll always try to fit in with owners' or occupiers' reasonable requirements and act in accordance with our Code of Practice for the Exercise of Pipe-Laying Powers. This leaflet is available from our website southernwater.co.uk/information-leaflets.

3.11 Leakage in our system

We're committed to ensuring the efficient use of available water resources. We have a legal duty to promote water efficiency and have a water efficiency programme, as described in the Water Resources Management Plan – southernwater.co.uk/water-resources-plan.

Reducing water loss, repairing leaks on our mains and preventing bursts are a top priority for us and we're proud of our record in this area. We have specialist teams working day and night to check for hidden leaks in our underground pipes.

If water is leaking from your outside stop tap, the water meter or the joints around the meter, we're responsible for putting this right.

You can help us by reporting any such leaks, free of charge 24-hours a day on **0800 820 999** or **0330 303 0146** (calls charged at local rate).

We aim to repair visible leaks as soon as possible. Those reported during a working day will be attended and inspected by the end of the next working day. Leaks reported out of normal working hours will be attended within the next two working days. We aim to repair 80% of leaks within five days – sooner if it's a severe leak.

3.12 Leakage on pipework owned by customers

This section sets out our Code of Practice for dealing with water leaks at household and mixed-use premises. It explains who is responsible for dealing with water leaks and what we'll do if a leak is found.

Water leaks are a waste of a precious resource and, if left to run, may cause damage to your property. The cost of putting right damage caused by a long-running leak is always far greater than dealing with it promptly.

Section 3.9 explains that the property owner is responsible for the supply pipe and internal fittings and therefore any repair or maintenance of these rests with them. We understand that finding and

fixing a leak on underground pipework is a daunting prospect for many customers. While we do provide some help with this (see below) we recommend that you consider arranging suitable cover through your household insurance or by taking out a specialist scheme that covers all types of plumbing repairs.

If you consider that maintenance is required on your pipework or you are arranging an emergency repair we recommend that you always hire a qualified plumber. This will assure you that all water regulations are met.

You can find a local qualified plumber through the WaterSafe scheme: watersafe.org.uk or call **0333 207 9030**.

There are some basic precautions that customers can take to help prevent leakage, such as protecting pipes with insulation in winter – for more information, visit southernwater.co.uk/prepare-for-winter.

Where the supply pipe is in poor condition and, therefore, at risk of leaking again it may be advisable to relay the pipe rather than repair. We can help, call us on **0330 303 0368**.

3.12.1 How do I know there's a leak?

Apart from the visible signs, such as water bubbling out of the ground or a very damp patch in your garden on a dry day, there are other ways of checking whether there's a leak.

If your water supply is metered you can carry out a simple check. Take a reading from the meter, then either turn off the supply indoors or make sure you've no taps or water-using appliances (eg washing machine or dishwasher) running.

After one hour, take another meter reading. If the reading is higher, you probably have a leak. Depending on where the leak is, you may also notice a drop in pressure at peak demand or a slight hissing noise, particularly at night when it is quiet. For further advice, call us on **0330 303 0368**.

3.12.2 Leakage detection service

Where a leak is suspected but is not visible because it's below ground, we offer a free leakage detection service, lasting up to one hour, for household customers.

Our equipment is very effective but we cannot guarantee we will find the exact source of the leak. We'll ensure that we update you with the results of our detection work. See **Section 3.12.3** for more information, including the timescales for any repair.

If you require any of these services or would like further information call our Customer Service Centre on **0330 303 0368**.

3.12.3 What help is available? Supply pipes

As shown on our **pipework responsibility diagram**, on page 12, customers must maintain and repair any leaks on their own internal pipework and the external supply pipe. Although the supply pipe is private and not our responsibility, we'll try and assist with leak detection (as explained in **Section 3.12.2**).

For customers who are on one of our special tariffs, on our special needs register or in receipt of means tested benefits, we can help with a free repair or subsidised renewal. This is a discretionary service and doesn't change your responsibility for the maintenance of the supply pipe. If you think you're eligible for a free repair please call us on **0330 303 0368**.

In some cases, for example where the same external supply pipe serves several properties, you and your neighbours are jointly responsible for the supply pipe. If you're unsure of the layout of the external pipework at your premises, you can call us on **0330 303 0368**.

If a leaking supply pipe is made of lead, we'll replace the first 10 metres free of charge, for all customers. Where necessary, renewal of additional lead supply pipe over 10 metres in length shall be offered at cost. The renewal of the lead communication pipe will be completed no later than within five working days, subject to traffic management.

3.12.4 Responsibilities for leaking water

Once the leak has been found, you (or the property owner, if you're a tenant) should arrange to have the leak repaired as soon as possible. If you don't make the repair within 30 days then you won't be able to claim the full leakage allowance (see **section 3.12.6**). If your insurance doesn't specify a particular contractor, you should get the work done by a reputable contractor of your choice. Websites such as checkatrade.com or watersafe.org.uk can help you find a qualified plumber.

Where your supply pipe runs under someone else's private land, it's still your responsibility to fix it, and you'll need to obtain agreement to dig on their land. Where you share your supply pipe with one or more other properties you'll have shared liability for the repair.

We have a legal duty to prevent loss of water from our supply system, so if you (or the owner) refuse to repair a leak or prevent us from carrying out a free repair, we can take the following action:

- We can repair the leak and send you a bill for the work carried out.
- We may consider legal proceedings under Section 75 of the Water Industry Act 1991.
- As a final action, we reserve the right to disconnect the water supply.

However, we hope none of these will ever be necessary.

3.12.5 Leakage checks when a meter is first installed

When we fit a meter, we check to establish if there's any leakage on the supply pipe. If a leak is detected and can be repaired without further excavation at that time, it will be done at our expense.

If a leak is detected that can't be repaired without further excavation, we'll let you know about the leak and help you, where possible, through the process of repair.

3.12.6 Will my metered bill be adjusted?

If you have a water meter, your bills will be based on the volume of water the meter records including any water wasted or lost through leaks from your pipework.

If you're paying metered charges and have had a leak, we'll make a one-time adjustment to both water supply and wastewater charges to reflect the extra amount of water recorded because of the leak, once it has been repaired. We normally recalculate your metered charges based on past usage. Where there's no record of past consumption, the adjustment will be based on two readings taken over a period of time.

If this isn't possible, an estimate will be based upon the number of people using the supply. Charges will normally be adjusted to cover the period when the supply was leaking. For those customers who've not previously received a bill, the recalculated charges will be backdated to the beginning of the billing period.

There will be no adjustment of charges if any of the following applies:

- Another leak occurs after an adjustment for an earlier leak.
- You (or someone else living with you) caused the leak through negligence.
- You knew, or could reasonably be expected to have known, that there was a leak and you failed to repair it or tell us about it.
- The leak occurred because of faulty pipes or fittings inside your home.
- You did not repair the leak within a reasonable period (30 days for full allowance, up to 90 days for partial allowance).

If you believe you may be entitled to a bill adjustment after making repairs, contact our Customer Service Centre within three months of receiving the bill in question. Our contact details, in **Section 2.2** of this document, are shown on our bills and at southernwater.co.uk/do-it-online.

3.12.7 What if my water is supplied by another company?

If your water is supplied by another company, you should contact them about any suspected or obvious leak.

If your water supplier makes an adjustment to your water charges, they'll send us details about the adjustment. You may be entitled to a bill adjustment for wastewater charges once we've received details from your water supplier. We'll review the circumstances, and where appropriate, make an adjustment. In some circumstances, such as the water from an obvious or prolonged leak returning to the public sewer, we may write to you and explain that our charges remain payable.

3.13 Lead pipes

Some older properties still have lead supply pipes and internal plumbing. Some lead can be transferred from these pipes into the water (see **Note 1** below). In areas where lead pipework is more prevalent, special treatment has been installed to reduce the level of lead picked up from pipework.

If (as part of our routine testing/at your request) we find a raised lead concentration in the water from your kitchen tap, we'll tell you. We must also tell your local environmental health officer. We'll

replace the communication pipe serving your property free of charge if it's lead. The householder/property owner is responsible for replacing the supply pipe and any internal lead pipes.

You should contact your local council, which may have grants available to assist you with the replacement of lead pipes.

Note 1: High lead level can have adverse health impact. We therefore recommend that lead supply pipes are replaced. Please visit dwi.gov.uk, the Drinking Water Inspectorate, for further information.

3.14 Mains records

We maintain digitised records showing the location of our water infrastructure. Individual or commercial developers may wish to view these records before beginning construction work. The records are available for inspection, free of charge, during working hours. Please call **0330 303 0368** to make an appointment and to discuss the most convenient office for you to visit.

3.15 Electrical earthing

Safe earthing of electrical appliances in your house is your responsibility and your water service pipe should not be used for earthing your household electrical installation.

Unfortunately, many houses, particularly those built before 1966, still rely on the water pipe as an earth. If your house is one of these, please remember that the increasing use of plastic water pipes reduces the effectiveness of your water pipe as an earth.

Where we have carried out work on your communication pipe, we will notify you, advising you of the possible effect on your electrical earthing. We also strongly advise you to have your electrical system tested as soon as possible, and brought up to standard if found to be defective.

You should consult your electricity supply company for advice on electrical earthing.

3.16 Changes to arrangements – new water connections

If you meet the conditions, we're required to connect your property to a water main at your request. Although you must pay for it, we'll provide the connection into the main and the communication pipe from the main to the external stop tap. You're not allowed to make the connection into our main yourself and we must lay any part of your supply pipe that involves digging up the public highway. If you want a new or altered connection, call our Customer Service Centre on **0330 303 0368**.

All new properties must have a separate communication pipe and a water meter. Once we've agreed to provide a new connection and payment has been received, where we can, we'll:

- make the connection as soon as possible once the supply pipe is laid and within 21 days
- make the connection within 14 days of you contacting us if the whole pipe from the property to our water main is already laid.

If we fail to connect your house within the 14 or 21 days allowed without a valid reason, we may be liable to you for loss or damage caused.

3.17 Changes in arrangements – new connection charges

Costs and charges are payable for new connections. These are:

- The cost of making the connection to the main.
- The cost of providing and laying our communication pipe together with a charge for installing a meter.
- An infrastructure charge, which contributes to the cost of local reinforcement to the distribution system. The maximum amount we can charge is fixed by our licence and is varied annually in line with the Retail Price Index. It's payable for premises newly connected. A separate infrastructure charge will also be payable for connection to the sewerage system.
- Where the site was previously developed and there's been a supply to the site within the previous five years, there may be a credit applied to the infrastructure charges. These credits will be calculated based on the information provided on the Application for New Connection Estimate form, available at: southernwater.co.uk/water-main-connections.

Further information concerning these costs and charges is available from the Customer Service Centre on **0330 303 0368**.

If we can't decide whether our connection costs were incurred reasonably, the issue can be referred to Ofwat for determination. A dispute over the terms of a condition that we've imposed for the purposes of metering can be referred to arbitration or, if we can't agree on an arbitrator, this can be determined by Ofwat. See **Section 16**.

3.18 New water mains

If you need a connection to an existing water main, you must lay or extend the supply pipe to a point close to that main. Alternatively, if your property is some distance away and, particularly if there are other properties involved, you may prefer us to lay an extension to the existing main along public highways nearer to your property. This would mean you have a shorter length of private supply pipe for which you remain responsible. You can ask us to do this whether you're the owner or the occupier of your property.

However, you must meet or underwrite the costs of a new water main. This means you will have to pay any difference between the income we receive from charges for water supplied from the main and our reasonable costs in providing the main.

You may choose to pay the amount as a lump sum or by instalments over 12 years. We'll require a deposit from you before beginning the work. We must pay interest on any monies we hold for longer than three months, at a rate set by Ofwat.

For our part, we have to provide the main within three months of your request. If we break this deadline and you suffer loss or damage as a result, you may have a legal claim against us. If we can't agree the amount you need to pay or the amount of security you should give, either of us can

refer the matter to Ofwat. In some circumstances your local council may be prepared to request a water main on your behalf.

If you want more information or wish to arrange for a quote, details are available from our website southernwater.co.uk/water-main-connections, or by contacting us on **0330 303 0119**.

3.19 Self-lay water mains

We'll also consider proposals from developers or their agents for new water mains and services for later management by us. This applies to design, installation and commissioning of new water mains and services to supply new or existing developments with water.

When considering the proposals we'll try to agree the most appropriate arrangements, taking into account statutory responsibilities, those elements of work the developer wishes to undertake directly and any other practical considerations.

Once we take over the main you'll receive an asset payment from us. This payment will be the present value of the income we expect to get from the properties connected to the main over the next 12 years. This figure is agreed before work begins. Further information is available from our Customer Services Centre on **0330 303 0368**.

3.20 Protection of water supplies against contamination

Water Supply Regulations are designed to prevent potable water being contaminated. They also prevent waste, undue consumption, misuse and interference with water meters. A short explanation of the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 (WSR 1999) is available from the Customer Service Centre, call **0330 303 0368**.

- All plumbing work carried out on your premises needs to comply with the regulations.
- All new materials or equipment installed need to comply with the regulations. The Water Regulations Advisory Scheme publishes a list of fittings that comply with these requirements [wras.co.uk/Directory/](https://www.wras.co.uk/Directory/).
- You should specify to any contractor you employ that all work should be undertaken in accordance with the regulations. Ideally you should use a contractor who is a member of the Water Industry Approved Plumber Scheme (WIAPS) https://www.wras.co.uk/consumers/approved_plumber_scheme/.
- If new or modified plumbing doesn't comply with our regulations, this may be a criminal offence and we can require you to put it right. In an emergency, we can disconnect your supply. If you use a plumber who is a member of WIAPS, it will be the plumber who's responsible for any such criminal liability.

The Water Fittings Regulations are made to protect the quality of the water we supply and are important to ensure the water supply does not become contaminated with potential harm to health.

4 Disposal of wastewater

4.1 Sewerage services

We own and operate the public sewers, which take wastewater from your drains to wastewater treatment works for treatment and disposal. We do this in accordance with legal standards set and monitored by the Department for Environment, Foods and Rural Affairs. The Environment Agency monitors our compliance with environmental legislation and enters its results in a public register.

We have several types of sewers:

- **Surface water sewers** that carry rainwater from roofs and hardstandings directly into rivers and the sea.
- **Foul sewers** that carry lavatory waste and used water from cooking, cleaning and washing to wastewater treatment works.
- **Combined sewers** that carry both of the above to wastewater treatment works.
- **Lateral drains** that carry either foul sewage or surface water from the boundary of your property to the main sewer.

4.2 Sewer ownership

We're responsible for maintaining public sewers and lateral drains (the section of a drain that serves only a single property but is outside the boundaries of the property). These are shown on the public sewer map.

Before 1 October 2011, we weren't responsible for private sewers and lateral drains. The government introduced legislation in the 2003 Water Act, which came into effect on 1 October 2011, transferring all private sewers (pipes serving two or more properties) and lateral drains to water companies.

These recently transferred private sewers and lateral drains may not be shown on our maps until they have been surveyed and mapped.

Our sewer records are available for inspection, free of charge, at local council offices. In addition, extracts can be obtained through the post, for a small fee. Contact our Customer Service Centre on **0330 303 0368**.

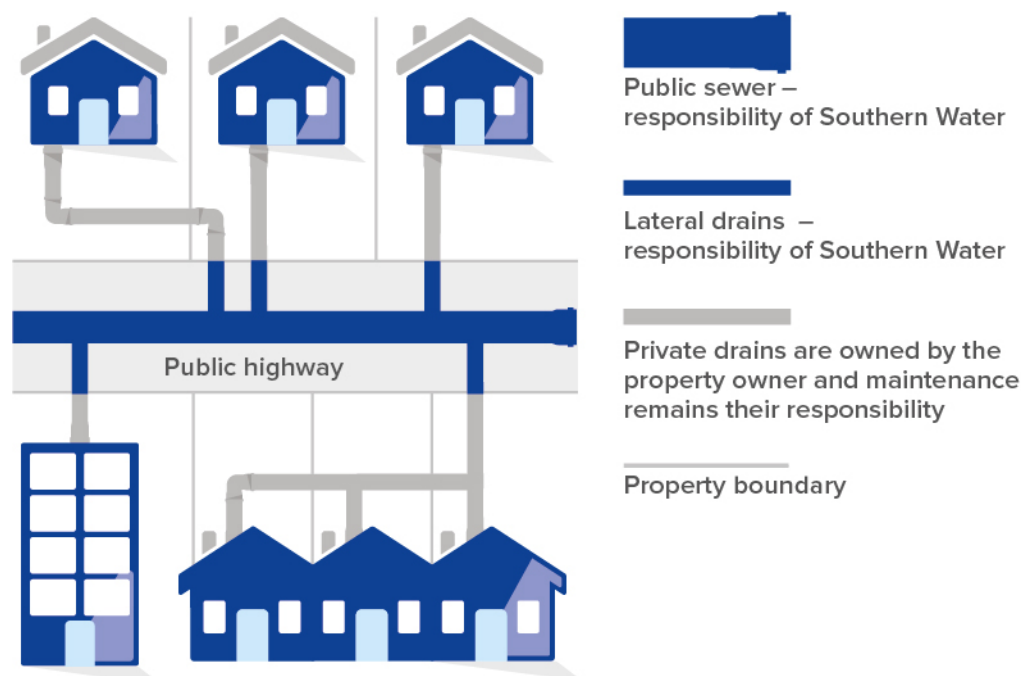
Most public sewers are situated beneath roads or public open spaces, but some run through private gardens and we have a right of access to maintain, repair or replace them. We also have legal protection against anyone building over or near to our sewers.

If we need to lay or maintain pipes on your land we'll observe our Code of Practice for the Exercise of Pipe-Laying Powers. Copies of the code will be sent with any notice in relation to the exercise of our powers. Should a dispute arise, refer to **Section 16** of this Code of Practice.

Household customers are only responsible for drains within the boundaries of their property that only serve their property.

If you're buying a property that is connected to a sewer, make sure that your solicitor asks whether your drain or private sewer connects to the public sewer and where. You'll be responsible for the maintenance, repair or replacement of the privately owned length and you may want to check its condition.

The diagram below shows the responsibility for drainage pipes:



If you have a problem with the public sewerage system, contact our Customer Service Centre on **0330 303 0368**.

4.3 Blockages in the sewers

We're responsible for clearing any blockages in public sewers and lateral drains, and we use specialist contractors to do this. If in doubt, contact us and we'll provide you with an extract from our sewer records, which will show the public sewers in your area. We'll arrange to have public sewers cleared promptly. If our sewer crews identify that the blockage is not our responsibility, for example, it's in a private drain, then we'll have to refer you to a private contractor to clear the blockage.

We're not responsible for clearing blockages in private drains (pipes serving only your property, and within the boundaries of your property) and you need to pay any contractors you call in to unblock them.

4.4 Protection against flooding from sewers

Public sewers are designed with enough capacity to protect homes from the risk of flooding. However, flooding from sewers can occur for a variety of reasons, for example following blockages, collapses or vandalism. Useful tips about what you should and shouldn't be putting down your sinks and toilets are available at: southernwater.co.uk/keep-it-clear.

In the event of an internal or external flooding incident, contact our Customer Service Centre on **0330 303 0368** at any time.

All customers are advised to maintain insurance cover against loss or damage to their buildings and contents as a result of flooding. If effluent from one of our sewers enters your building you're entitled to an automatic payment or credit equal to twice the annual wastewater charge for the current year (subject to a minimum of £150) for each event.

In the event of external flooding, you're entitled to a payment or credit equivalent to half of your wastewater charges (£75 minimum to a maximum of £500), but you need to claim the payment within three months of the incident. A claim form can be downloaded at southernwater.co.uk/media/default/PDFs/ExternalFlooding_ClaimForm.pdf.

These payments won't apply if flooding is caused by exceptional weather, industrial action, your own actions or any defect, inadequacy or blockage in your drains or private sewers. If you suffer losses as a result of flooding from a sewer, contact your insurance company in the first instance.

Southern Water isn't responsible for the damage that flooding may cause. However, we'll assist with clearing up after an event to get you back on your feet. This assistance will be provided as part of the first response following your call to report the flooding incident. If we're experiencing a high volume of incidents, there may be a delay in providing this assistance.

See **Section 14.4** for full details of our Guaranteed Standards of service and the conditions relating to sewer flooding.

4.5 Adopted sewers

Section 42 of the Flood and Water Management Act requires all new sewers and lateral drains to be designed and constructed to the Mandatory Build Standard (published before this legislation).

Before making a connection to the sewerage system you need approval from us (a **Section 106 agreement**) and you'll also need to have approval of the design of the proposed works and an agreement from us to adopt on completion (a **Section 104 agreement**).

If you want to make a connection to the sewerage system, whether for a single house or a development site, contact us as soon as possible.

Sewers for Adoption, published by WRc, sets out in more detail the requirements for sewer design and is currently being revised to take into account these legislative changes. It can be viewed at southernwater.co.uk/adoption-of-new-sewers-or-pumping-station.

A Sewers for Adoption package containing guidance notes and an application form can be downloaded from southernwater.co.uk/adoption-of-new-sewers-or-pumping-station or is available from our Customer Service Centre on **0330 303 0277**.

We're not responsible for sewers that haven't been adopted.

If you think that we've imposed unreasonable conditions for adoption, you can appeal to Ofwat – see **Section 16**.

4.6 New connections to the public sewer

As the owner or occupier of your property, you're entitled to have a drain or private sewer connected to an appropriate public sewer. You need to give us notice if you want to do this. You can contact us on **0330 303 0119**, or visit southernwater.co.uk/new-sewer-connection for a sewer connection application pack, which details the procedure to be followed.

- The construction details should be in accordance with the specification supplied in the application pack.
- Once we've received your notice we'll tell you within 21 days if your proposals are acceptable. No connection should be attempted within this period without our specific agreement.
- We may choose to carry out the connection works ourselves. If this is the case, we'll tell you within 14 days of receipt of the completed application form.
- If we're not making the connection ourselves, once you've received approval from us, we ask that you give us 48 hours notice of your intention to start the work.
- Charges are payable as outlined in **Section 4.7** below.
- Any person making an illegal connection into a public sewer is committing an offence and may be liable to a fine. Also, we can disconnect the drain or sewer and recover the costs of doing so.
- If we find a sewer has been wrongly connected, eg a foul water drain connected to a surface water sewer, we'll ask for it to be fixed immediately or disconnected.
- It's also illegal to connect land drains, draining unsurfaced areas, to the public sewers as this can cause flooding to other properties.

4.7 New sewer connection payments

Costs and charges are payable to us for connections to the public sewer. What these are for and when they should be paid, are as follows:

- If we make the connection ourselves, the estimated cost is payable in advance.
- If we agree to you making the connection yourself, our costs for administrating and approving your proposal are payable in advance.
- An infrastructure charge that contributes to the cost of providing sewerage systems, is payable for each newly connected premises. The maximum amount of this charge is fixed by our licence and is varied annually in line with the Retail Price Index.
- If a site has been previously developed and had a sewer connection less than five years before your new connection request has been made, a credit may be applied to the infrastructure charges. These credits will be calculated based on the information provided on the 'Application for new connection estimate' form, available at southernwater.co.uk/new-sewer-connection.

Further information concerning these costs and charges is available from our Customer Service Centre. If we can't approve your proposals, estimated costs or any difference in our final costs, the matter can be referred to Ofwat for determination.

If you want to lay a drain or sewer in the public highway, you need to check you have the right to do so by contacting the Highway Authority.

4.8 New sewers

If your house is some distance from the nearest public sewer, you may want us to extend the sewerage system nearer to your property, particularly if you have neighbours who also want to connect their properties to main drainage. Whether you're the owner or the occupier of your house, you can ask us to provide a sewer for you.

However, you'll need to meet or underwrite the costs of a new sewer. This means you'll have to pay any difference between the income we receive from charges that relate to the sewer and our reasonable costs in providing the sewer. You may choose to pay a lump sum or pay by instalments over 12 years. We'll ask for a deposit, equal to the discounted aggregated deficit, before beginning the work. We pay interest on monies held for longer than three months, at a rate set by Ofwat.

For our part, we normally provide the sewer within six months of the request, however, this may be extended by agreement. If we can't meet this deadline and no extension has been agreed and you sustain loss or damage as a result, you may have a legal claim against us. If we can't agree the amount you should pay or the amount of security you should give, either of us can refer the matter to Ofwat. In some circumstances, your local council may be prepared to make the request on your behalf.

If you want more information on this complex subject, guidance notes and an application form are available at southernwater.co.uk/new-sewer-connection or call us on **0330 303 0119**.

4.9 First time sewerage schemes

Section 101A of the Water Industry Act gives us additional responsibilities for the provision of first-time sewerage, where there is an adverse effect on the environment. This applies to properties not already connected to the sewerage system. Initially you should contact the Developer Services team at southernwater.co.uk/developers-and-builders-contact-us or call us on **0330 303 0119**. We'll be able to give you general information regarding this procedure and arrange to have the guidance notes and application forms sent to you.

Under **Section 98** of The Water Industry Act 1991 it's our duty to provide a public sewer for domestic purposes if required to do so by certain person(s) (the requisitioner).

Where we provide a public sewer in response to an application under **Section 98** or **Section 101A**, we may also, under the provisions of **Section 101B** and at the request of the person requiring the sewer, provide at the same time one or more lateral drains to connect to the sewer, to be used for drainage for domestic purposes. A lateral drain is the section of pipe connecting the house drainage from the boundary of the property to the public sewer.

If we provide the lateral drain, the person who requested it will be required to pay any costs incurred. We'll adopt laterals provided under this section.

4.10 Odour from works

Our treatment processes meet the Environment Agency quality standards, however, you may occasionally encounter problems with odours from our sites. Our monitoring devices will help us quickly detect odour issues, but we also rely on the public to call us on **0330 303 0368** if they smell the treatment works.

5 Our care for the environment

We're committed to looking after the environment. This is something our customers have told us they expect and value. We'll therefore develop and deliver our Environment Policy with the aim of continually improving our environmental management system to improve our performance in line with customer expectations.

Our Executive Leadership Team is responsible for this policy.

Our employees share responsibility for environmental management and performance.

We will:

- reflect the needs and views of our customers and stakeholders in developing and delivering this policy
- conform to our compliance obligations by meeting or exceeding the environmental requirements of legislation, regulation and our adopted standards
- prevent pollution, eliminate serious pollution incidents and contain the environmental impact of our activities
- provide sustainable and reliable water and wastewater services that minimise both nuisance and carbon emissions, taking into account the opportunities to mitigate and offset the impact of global climate change
- be a good and trusted neighbour, looking after the environment wherever we operate
- operate within a framework that supports and monitors sustainable development
- incorporate sustainable development principles to balance economic, environmental and social aspects in our business decisions
- continually improve our performance by maintaining and developing our Environmental Management System to the ISO 14001 standard
- develop indicators with measurable performance targets and report progress against these annually
- protect the environment by promoting the sustainable and efficient use and conservation of water, energy and natural resources
- promote the purchase and use of materials in a way that minimises potential environmental effects
- minimise waste, considering first prevention, then preparation for re-use, then recycling and, finally, recovery
- ensure we have the skills and knowledge to improve our environmental performance
- deliver assets that maintain sound environmental performance, protecting biodiversity and natural ecosystems during asset delivery
- learn from our successes and from incidents, sharing best practice with others
- work as one team with our customers, contractors, regulators, suppliers and with each other to achieve our vision.

6 Water efficiency plan and initiatives

6.1 Long-term plan

All water companies have water resource management plans, which look 25 years ahead and include current and projected future demands for water. These plans are regularly updated to account for factors such as projections of household numbers and occupancy rates and the implications of climate change. These plans, which complement the Environment Agency's strategies, are a statutory requirement under provisions in the Water Act 2003.

All water companies in England and Wales prepare and maintain water resources management and drought plans that set out how they will continue to meet their duties to supply adequate quantities of wholesome water. Visit southernwater.co.uk/have-your-say/ to see our latest plans.

6.2 Efficient use of water

We have a detailed plan to promote the efficient use of water. This includes the installation of water meters for household properties, as detailed in **Section 7**.

As demand for water grows, so does the pressure on the environment, as we need to take more from underground sources and rivers or build more reservoirs. Water conservation is becoming an increasingly important aspect of our work.

Our plan to promote the careful use of water by customers is in four parts:

- Our work to conserve water – leading by example
- Information
- Education
- Practical assistance.

6.3 Our work to conserve water

Creating a culture of water-saving involves us playing our own part to show a partnership with customers. We are:

- launching a new internal engagement strategy, including a programme of water audits and retrofits for employees' homes to enable understanding of what we offer to our customers
- checking and reducing our own use of water through water-saving fixtures and fittings in washroom upgrades and the planning of a pilot rainwater harvesting scheme for a wastewater treatment site
- driving down leakage levels in our supply systems. We already have one of the lowest levels of leakage of all the water and sewerage companies. We intend to maintain this position and continue to reduce the amount of water lost from our distribution network
- carrying out household and commercial customer research to ensure we understand their needs and react accordingly.

6.4 Information

Our website, southernwater.co.uk/in-the-home contains videos and useful tips for saving water at home. We've produced a booklet on the efficient use of water in the home garden, which is available free on request from the Customer Service Centre on **0330 303 0277**.

We were the first water company to promote the new European Water label, which makes it easier for customers to choose water-efficient products. Agreement was reached between the government, retailers, manufacturers and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to introduce the label across all taps, showers, toilets and baths, which has meant customers are able to choose more efficient products, saving water, energy and money.

6.5 Education

We also have a resource pack aimed specifically at primary schools, which combines the water efficiency messages with those of our fat, oil and grease (FOG) and 'Unflushables' campaigns. The pack aims to educate children and their parents about what should and shouldn't be put down toilets and drains. Our trained speakers also give talks to adult groups, such as Women's Institutes, gardening clubs and parish councils.

We work with schools in many different ways, directly and indirectly. Partners who help deliver water efficiency messages include WaterAid, football clubs and a touring theatre company. Our own colleagues also deliver workshops and presentations regularly in schools and at other events, on request. Additionally, our Water Café attends family-friendly events during the summer months distributing water-saving devices and helpful tips.

Water efficiency school visits take place across the region, combining the physical fitting of water-saving products with activities and education materials teaching behaviour change. We'll be working closely with local authorities to ensure maximum savings are achieved.

6.6 Practical assistance

There are a number of important initiatives aimed at providing practical assistance for household customers to save water:

- If you suspect you have a leak, contact our Customer Service Centre on **0330 303 0368**.
- Our Developer Services team is available on **0330 303 0119** and will provide free advice for developers to promote water efficiency in the design and fitting of new properties.
- Since 2010 we've installed a water meter at most of the household properties in our water supply area unless it's not possible to do so.
- We continue to send 'Save-a-flush' bags to customers, on request.

7 Our metering programme

The Secretary of State has determined our water supply area one of serious water stress. By virtue of regulations made under the Water Industry Act 1999, this provides us with legal powers to install water meters for charging purposes.

Since 2010 we've been installing water meters on an area-by-area basis. Under this programme, household properties are being metered for charging purposes. Meters fitted under our universal metering programme have been fitted free of charge.

Once a meter has been installed, there'll be no opportunity to change back to an unmetered basis of charge at any time in the future. All water use at the premises will be subject to metered charges.

In some situations, it's not practical to fit a meter owing to the supply configuration, and in these circumstances we provide an assessed metered charge. The assessed charge is a fixed charge based upon the number of bedrooms in your premises, or, where applicable, on a single-occupancy basis.

Once charges have been fixed on an assessed metered basis, we'll be happy to switch to metered where changes have been made to the supply pipe work configuration, allowing for the installation of a water meter.

8 Options when a meter can't be fitted

8.1 If we've been unable to fit a meter

If it's not possible to install a meter at your property you'll be given a number of options:

- You may make private arrangements for your pipework to be altered to enable us to install a meter. Unfortunately, due to the nature of some individual private supply arrangements, this option may not be available to every customer.
- If you live in a flat within a block and we're unable to meter your individual flat, we may be able to meter the block as a whole. For further information see **Section 8.2** Common supplies.
- We can provide an assessed metered charge, which is a fixed charge based on the number of bedrooms in your premises, or, where applicable, on a single-occupancy basis.

8.2 Common supplies (flats)

In some blocks of flats or converted houses, elements of shared water supplies exist. Examples are:

- Outside taps for communal garden watering
- Standpipes in garage compounds
- Communal header tanks in the attic of the building, feeding hot water systems, showers, toilets
- Communal laundry facilities.

If, following our initial survey, we establish that this is the position for your property and it's not possible for you to sensibly make the necessary alterations to your private pipework, we'll be unable to install a meter to record the entire volume of water supplied to you.

However, it may be possible to meter the entire block of flats that you live in, provided that:

- we receive written acceptance from each bill-paying customer
- one person or entity, such as a management or residents' association, accepts responsibility for payment of the metered charge
- none of the occupiers are currently receiving water services accounts calculated on a metered basis by reference to recorded consumption.

8.3 Reverting to unmetered charges

Under the terms of our metering programme (see **Section 7**), once you've been switched to metered charges or an assessed charge, there'll be no opportunity to revert to the old rateable value basis of charge at any time in the future.

For further information, call our Customer Service Centre, on **0330 303 1262**.

9 Water meters – additional information

If you have a water meter, here are some points to remember.

9.1 Leakage and waste

If you have a meter, you'll be paying for water leaking from pipes and fittings for which you're responsible. You should ensure they are kept in good order and repair. Please see **Section 3.11** on leakage, which provides you with details of the safeguards in these circumstances. If you're able, it's in your interest to make frequent check readings of the meter to identify any excessive use and to enable early action to be taken. Advice on leak detection is available from the Customer Service Centre and at southernwater.co.uk/leak-detection.

9.2 Testing the meter

All meters are tested before they're installed. If you question the accuracy of the meter we'll carry out an initial accuracy check free of charge. However, high consumption is normally more likely to indicate leakage or waste, than a faulty meter.

If you ask for another test and the meter is found to be within the prescribed limits, then we'll ask you to pay a charge of £70 + VAT. The charge is payable before the test is carried out and will be refunded if the meter is found to exceed the prescribed limits.

9.3 Works affecting the meter

The meter remains our property. You need to contact our Customer Service Centre to seek permission to do anything that may affect its operation or the accuracy of its measurement.

9.4 Interfering with the meter

If you interfere with the meter or carry out work that prevents it registering accurately, you'll be committing an offence and liable to a fine and a fee for putting it right. The regulations enable us to prosecute through the Magistrates court, where a fine of up to £1,000 may be imposed.

9.5 Change of occupation or ownership

You need to give us at least two working days' advance notice, excluding weekends and bank holidays, so that we can obtain a closing reading. If you fail to do so you'll continue to be responsible for metered charges at the property beyond the date you leave. In this situation your responsibility ends on the earliest of the following dates:

- 28 days after you tell us of your move
- The next routine meter reading date
- The day we're notified of details of the new occupier.

For further information, including requests for meter testing, contact the Customer Service Centre on **0330 303 0277**.

10 Payment of charges

10.1 Charges

The water industry goes through a thorough price review process every five years, which is led by the industry regulator Ofwat. The new price review period runs from April 2015 to March 2020 and water companies like us are subject to a new set of price controls that have been put in place by Ofwat. This requires water companies to undertake a review of their charges and charging structures.

We're managing a substantial capital investment programme for the period 2015–20. Over the five year period, we'll be spending around £3 billion to deliver a range of improvements for customers across Kent, Sussex, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. In the same period, average bills will fall by a total of 8% before adjustments are made each year for inflation.

As well as covering the day-to-day running costs of supplying clean drinking water and taking away and treating wastewater, the investment programme will include:

- New schemes to replace water mains, protect water supplies, reduce leakage and improve water quality.
- A programme to replace sewers, schemes to help prevent flooding, the enhancement of wastewater treatment and ensuring there are more beaches with 'Excellent' bathing water quality.
- The delivery of improved customer services.

Details of our charges and charging policies are found in our charges guides which are available free from the Customer Service Centre or at southernwater.co.uk/our-charges. We have standard tariffs for the services we provide in respect of unmetered and metered water supplies and wastewater collection and disposal.

VAT is payable only on certain charges and this is detailed on bills, where appropriate.

As a household customer, your water services charges are calculated either on an unmetered basis, by reference to either your property's rateable value, or an assessed rate or on a metered basis, by reference to the volume of water supplied as recorded by a water meter.

Normally, the occupier of the premises receiving our services is liable to pay our charges. This applies even if the occupier is a tenant and the tenancy agreement says the landlord will pay our charges. The landlord will only be liable if he agrees this with us directly or pays the bills in his name.

Many landlords find it convenient to use the Landlord TAP facility at landlordtap.com. This is an easy-to-use website that allows all landlords and managing agents of properties in England and Wales to provide water companies with details of those responsible for the payment of water and/or wastewater charges.

It's in your interest to ensure we are notified of changes in occupier. This is particularly important if you've a water meter, as the Water Industry Act 1991 states that you're required to give us at least two working days' advance notice, excluding weekends and bank holidays, before you leave your premises so we can obtain a closing reading. If you don't and are unable to provide a final meter

reading, you may be held liable for charges beyond the date that you exit the property. See **Section 9.5**.

On receipt of your final account, we'll refund any outstanding credit balance within 10 working days of your request or transfer it to your new property, if it's in our area.

10.2 What if you're a tenant?

The person primarily responsible for payment of water service charges is the occupier of the property. Unless your landlord has entered into a written agreement with us accepting responsibility for our charges, this means you, as the tenant, must pay the bills.

We're not party to the terms of your tenancy agreement. If you believe water services charges are included in your rent but we've written to you asking for payment, you'll need to ask your landlord to contact us and make payment. However, in the event that your landlord does not pay, we'll have to ask you to pay.

If the bill you've received is for a previous tenant, please call us so we can send you a correct bill.

If you experience a leak on your supply pipe and live in a property where your landlord is a management company, housing association or is council owned, it may be your landlord's responsibility to carry out any repairs. Please contact them immediately if you suspect a problem. Please also let us know, as we may be able to help you with the bill. See **Section 3.12.6**.

If you're a landlord, you may find it convenient to use the Landlord TAP facility at: landlordtap.com. This is an easy-to-use website that allows all landlords and managing agents of properties in England and Wales to provide water companies with details of those responsible for the payment of water and/or wastewater charges.

10.3 How are charges calculated

Some households receive unmetered services. Services are supplied on a metered basis if:

- A meter has been installed as part of our metering programme
- You've chosen to have a meter installed
- A meter was already installed
- You've made a new connection to our water main
- You wish to use a sprinkler or unattended watering device and haven't yet received a meter under our Metering Programme
- You've a swimming pool/recreational pool and haven't yet received a meter under our Metering Programme.

To apply for a meter:

- Call the Customer Service Centre on **0330 303 1262**
- Visit southernwater.co.uk/apply-for-meter

10.4 Unmetered accounts

Historically, water charges have been predominantly unmetered and calculated based on the rateable value of the property.

Rateable values haven't been assessed by the Valuation Office since 1990, and all new properties have had water meters fitted since then. While water companies are permitted to continue using this outdated method of charging increasingly in the South East of England, water companies are switching their customers to metered charging.

Since 2010, we've introduced a programme to fit water meters at household properties in our water supply area. Where metering is not possible because of the configuration of the private pipework, our fixed rate assessed tariff is employed as the method of charge. This charge is based on the number of bedrooms in the customer's home, which is used as a proxy for occupancy.

Using assumptions about typical per capita water consumption for metered customers, assessed charges are set by applying our metered tariff to the total assessed consumption at the property. A single occupier discount is also available on this tariff.

A relatively small number of our customers receive charges based on rateable value. The circumstances are:

- Customers live in an area where the water supply is provided by another water company and that company hasn't yet decided to fit water meters.
- The property is in our water supply area and hasn't yet been switched to a metered water supply or an assessed charge.

For rateable value based charges, we make separate charges for water supply services and for wastewater services, if we provide them. In both cases charges will comprise:

- a standing charge, which is set to recover the costs of servicing each account, for example, the costs of billing, cash collection, debt recovery and enquiry handling
- a charge calculated on the rateable value of the premises served as at 31 March 1990. Charges are subject to a minimum charge.

If your property doesn't have a rateable value and we're unable to fit a water meter, we'll apply an assessed metered charge based on the number of bedrooms in your premises, or on single occupancy, not direct usage.

If your property is connected to a public sewer for the drainage of surface water only, you'll also have to pay a fixed charge for the surface water drainage.

Where water is used for any other purpose specified by us (garages, pools or troughs), we'll fix a charge for that purpose.

10.5 Metered accounts

We make separate charges for water supply services and for wastewater services, if we provide them. In both cases our charges comprise:

- a standing charge which is set to recover the costs of servicing each account, for example the costs of meter reading, billing, cash collection, debt recovery and enquiry handling
- a charge based on the volume of water supplied as recorded by the meter.

Your charges for water supply services will be calculated on the amount of water supplied as recorded on the meter. If the meter is not operating properly or we're unable to read it for some reason, we'll make a reasonable estimate of the amount supplied and calculate your charges on this. If you disagree with the estimate, we'll review any information you can provide about water usage and discuss this with you.

Your charges for wastewater services will be assessed on the amount of clean water supplied less a fixed allowance of 7.5% in respect of water not discharged to the sewer (for example, outside water use).

10.6 Surface water rebate

Our full sewerage standing charge is made up of different elements. These are waste (foul) water, surface water and highway drainage.

For the majority of our customers, the rain that falls on to roofs, paths and driveways enters the public sewer and is treated by us. If surface water doesn't drain from your property into the sewerage system but into soakaways - a private surface water drain or sewer that doesn't enter the public sewerage system - then you're entitled to a rebate.

To request a rebate please call our 24-hour message line on **0330 303 1266** or complete and submit our online form at southernwater.co.uk/surface-water-rebate-form (**See Note 3.**)

The highway drainage element covers the cost of highway water run-off. It's payable by all customers who benefit from a connection to the public sewerage system.

Note 3: Rebates will be backdated to 1 April 2015.

10.7 Payment of water and sewerage service charges

We know there are many demands on household budgets. Organising your budget and finding money to pay bills can sometimes be difficult. However, water and wastewater bills must be paid.

Customer care is a top priority for us and **Section 11** informs you how we can help if you're experiencing difficulties. This section also explains what steps we can take to collect our charges if you don't pay or we're unable to agree a satisfactory payment arrangement with you. However, we'll always try to be flexible in our approach and are committed to doing everything possible to reach an agreement with which you'll be happy.

Don't pay more than you have to ...

If you don't pay your charges when they are due or we cannot come to a satisfactory payment arrangement with you, the whole amount becomes due. As a last resort we may end up employing the services of an external debt collection agency or taking you to court. This will involve you paying extra costs because you'll also have to pay an administration fee or court fees and our solicitor's costs. We prefer to avoid this option but, like all businesses, we need our customers to pay for the services they receive.

10.8 Paying unmetered accounts

Our charges are calculated for the year from 1 April and are payable on that date. However, payment can be made by:

- two instalments, on 1 April and 1 October, which may be paid by Direct Debit
- prior arrangement in 12 monthly instalments through the year. This option is available to all household customers, on request.

If any instalment is not paid by the date due, we can ask for the charges to be paid in full. We'll only withdraw instalment arrangements as a last resort and, therefore, urge you to contact us immediately.

10.9 Paying metered accounts

We'll aim to read your meter every six months and issue a bill based on this reading. Where we can't take a reading, the bill will be based on an estimation of consumption or you may provide a customer reading.

You'll receive your bill shortly afterwards and it's then due for payment. Alternatively, you can make monthly budget plan payments.

10.10 Payment options

As detailed on the back of our bills, you can pay your bill using a variety of methods. We offer a range of payment intervals including weekly, fortnightly, monthly, as well as annual and half-yearly options for unmetered charges (see **Note 4**, below). You can pay in the following ways:

- **Your Account** – Stay organised online by signing up to online services at southernwater.co.uk. You can set up a Direct Debit or payment card with just a few clicks. Alternatively, you can pay by debit/credit card.
- **By Direct Debit** – This is the simplest and most convenient method. You can apply online at southernwater.co.uk, we can take your details over the phone, or send you a form to complete. It's safe, easy to arrange and it offers a choice of payment dates.
- **By debit or credit card** – We're able to accept payment by credit or debit card over the phone on **0330 303 0277**. You can also use our 24-hour automated service on **0330 303 1263**.

- **By cash or cheque payment at the bank** – No extra fee is charged if you pay at any Post Office or branch of National Westminster Bank. If you pay at any other bank, you may be charged a small fee for each payment.
- **By post** – Complete and tear off the payment slip on your bill and send it with your cheque to Southern Water, PO Box 41, Worthing, West Sussex BN13 3NZ.
- **At any Post Office** – Fill in the payment slip and take it, with your payment card, to any Post Office where you can pay free of charge.
- **PayPoint** – For customers who prefer to pay at a local facility, there are PayPoint collection terminals, in newsagents, convenience stores, supermarkets, garages and off-licences. You'll need to take your payment card or your bill to the local PayPoint outlet with the cash to make a payment. You'll receive a receipt for the payment, which must be retained as proof of payment.
- **Phone banking** – Please quote the 13 digits of your payment reference without any spaces. Our bank sort code is 57-70-63 and, if requested, our bank account number is 00000000.
- **By payment card** – This can be used free of charge at any Post Office or PayPoint outlets in local shops for weekly, fortnightly or monthly payments.
- **By standing order** – This is similar to Direct Debit except that you have to tell your bank every time any change needs to be made to the payment amount. Please ensure you quote your payment reference as indicated on your bill (it should be 13 digits without any spaces). Our bank sort code is 57-70-63 and our bank account number is 00000000.

Note 4: All methods of payments are free of charge unless specified.

10.11 What if you don't keep to the agreement or don't pay the bill?

If you don't pay your bill or keep to a payment arrangement we've agreed with you, we'll take the following actions:

Stage 1

We'll send you a payment reminder giving you a minimum of 10 days to pay the outstanding amount.

Alternatively, if you don't make payments in accordance with an agreed instalment arrangement, a withdrawal of instalments warning letter will be sent to you requesting that any unpaid instalments are paid within seven days. If we don't receive the outstanding payments, we'll cancel the instalment plan and the total outstanding balance will then be due in full.

Stage 2

If you don't pay or contact us to agree a payment arrangement, we'll send you a notification of intention to file a record of non-payment, on your consumer credit file. The notice will explain that if you fail to pay the amount owing to us within 32 days of receipt, we'll be entitled to register a default against your consumer credit file with credit reference agencies. This is likely to make it more difficult for you to obtain credit in the future and the default of the payment could stay on your credit file for six years.

If you contact us within 28 days of receipt of the notice and enter into an agreed repayment plan, including our receipt of the first payment, the default will not be registered. However, the repayment plan must be maintained to avoid the risk of a default being registered at a later date. Any payment made will be posted against the oldest outstanding balance.

If there's an unresolved dispute on your account or if you've an agreed payment plan that's up to date, we won't register a default on your credit file.

If you're experiencing financial problems we can help, and details of our financial assistance schemes are provided with the notice of intention to file a default.

There'll only be one default filed against a customer at any one time for any one property. Where a default has already been registered, any further debt will be posted against this existing default. If you have a complaint regarding the registration of the default and, following investigation, it's appropriate for the default to be removed, we'll send you a compensation payment as outlined in **Section 14.5**.

You may also wish to contact the credit reference agency Experian about an incorrect registration of a default and it may also provide a compensation payment if any loss has been incurred from its incorrect action. Experian may be contacted at:

- Consumer Help Service, PO Box 8000, Nottingham NG80 7WF
- Phone: **0344 481 0800 or 0800 013 88 88**
- Visit: [experian.co.uk](https://www.experian.co.uk).

Stage 3

If you still don't pay or contact us, we may take either of the following actions:

a) Ask an independent debt collection agency to recover the amount owing. This may result in additional charges being added to your account. You'll be advised if we choose to take this action. All the companies we use are members of the Credit Services Association and operate under the association's strict code of practice on debt collection. Copies of this code are available from the Credit Services Association on 0191 286 5656.

If, when being referred to an external debt collection agency, you are successfully assessed for one of our financial assistance schemes, any additional charges will be removed. Details of all schemes and help can be found in Section 11, Customers who need financial assistance.

If your account is referred to an external company and you've any complaint concerning the company, which you are unable to resolve directly with them, we'll investigate your complaint and, if appropriate, remove your account from their files.

b) We may send you a 'Letter Before Legal Action', which explains the action we'll take if payment or contact is not received within 14 days.

In the event of financial difficulties, full details of how to contact us or debt advice agencies are provided on the reverse of the letter.

If at this stage, you fail to pay or contact us, we may issue a county court claim to recover our charges. You'll have to pay the fee for the issue of the claim and our solicitor's costs. If you don't

respond, the court may issue a judgment order for payment of the full amount due to us. If you still don't pay, we may take further legal action to enforce the judgment order which may include:

- i) Issuing a warrant or writ to instruct the bailiff or High Court enforcement officer to seize your belongings and sell them at auction.
- ii) Use of the High Court enforcement officers will incur substantial further costs, which you will have to pay in addition to the judgment debt. These fees, approved by Parliament, are set out in the High Court enforcement officer's regulations amendment 2014 and can be viewed at legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2014/1/schedule/made. Alternatively a hard copy of this information can be provided by contacting us on 0330 303 1261.
- iii) You may be served with an 'Order to Attend' notice, which will require you to attend your local court in person to give evidence, under oath, of your financial circumstances.
- iv) Ask the court to place a charge against your property if you own your home. This means if you sell or re-mortgage your home, the money you owe us will have to be paid. As a last resort, to recover the debt if you don't agree to a repayment plan, we may apply to the court to order the sale of the property.
- v) Applying to the court to take a deduction from your income. The court will contact your employer to deduct the money direct from your earnings.
- vi) We may apply to the court for a third party debt order that will require your bank or building society to pay the debt direct from your accounts.
- vii) Commencing insolvency proceedings against represents our last resort.

Remember, a county court judgment will have an impact on your credit rating and may prevent you from purchasing goods on credit or obtaining a mortgage or other loan for a significant period of time. Substantial costs may be added to your bill if you don't respond or keep up repayments on judgment debts.

If South East Water bill you for wastewater on our behalf you will be subject to the debt recovery procedures set out in [South East Water's code of practice](#).

10.12 Exchange of data/privacy

If you contact us at any stage, we'll try to agree a payment arrangement with you to avoid any further action. We may exchange data with relevant credit reference and fraud prevention agencies. Some processes may be automated. A condensed guide to the use of your personal information by us and the credit reference and fraud prevention agencies is sent out with each customer's bill.

We operate a privacy policy and this can be viewed at southernwater.co.uk/privacy. This explains how we may use information supplied or collected from you or via other sources. It also links to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) website for your further information and you may also wish to visit the following ICO reference/guidance document link Credit Explained: <https://ico.org.uk/media/for-the-public/.../1282/credit-explained-dp-guidance.pdf>.

10.13 What if you dispute the bill?

If you don't believe that you're responsible for paying the bill, or you disagree with the amount, you must tell us straight away. Call us on 0330 303 0277 for help and advice.

No further action will be taken while we look into the matter. We may need to ask you to provide further details to support your dispute.

If we don't agree with you, we'll tell you why and require you to either have to pay the charges in full or agree a payment plan with us.

If you're not happy with our decision, there's an established complaint procedure which may involve an investigation by a senior manager or director. Your complaint can be referred to the Consumer Council for Water (CCWater) – see Independent Assessment (**Section 13.7**). Please let us know if you have contacted CCWater so we can make sure we don't take further recovery action while you receive their advice.

Our leaflet detailing our complaint procedure is available to download at southernwater.co.uk/complaints-procedure or by calling or writing to us – see **Section 13**.

11 Customers who need financial assistance

11.1 How to get help if you can't pay your bill in full?

We understand that some of our customers face genuine financial difficulties. Although water services have to be paid for, we always try to be flexible in our approach and are committed to doing everything possible to reach a resolution. If you've difficulties paying, contact us as soon as you can:

Call us:

0800 027 0363 – Monday to Friday, 8am to 7pm and Saturday, 9am to 1pm. Calls using this number will be free of charge from a BT landline. Charges may apply from other service providers and mobiles.

Write to us:

Southern Water, PO Box 41, Worthing, West Sussex BN13 3NZ

Email us:

Complete our online form at <https://assistance.southernwater.co.uk/financialassistance>.

It's vital to talk to us if you're having difficulties paying your bill. We know this can be a hard conversation to have, but our specialist advisers can help you find a solution that suits your situation, possibly breaking your payments down into more manageable amounts. Your case will be handled in complete confidence and our adviser will look to place you on the most suitable payment scheme or tariff, based on your circumstances.

11.2 What we'll do to help

We'll try to understand your circumstances and reach an agreement with you to pay your bill within a reasonable time limit, in amounts you can afford. We offer a range of options and weekly, fortnightly or monthly payment plans.

If you don't already have a meter installed and you live in a property with a high rateable value, we can discuss whether changing to a metered supply could reduce your future bills. You can contact the Customer Service Centre on **0330 303 1262** for further information and a detailed information leaflet can also be provided.

If you already have a meter, we can discuss water-saving measures with you. We have a number of helpful leaflets available, together with a Leakage Code of Practice. You can request these from our Customer Service Centre on **0330 303 0277**. In certain cases, you may also be eligible for help under the WaterSure or Essentials Tariff – see below.

Help us to help you by calling **0800 027 0363** between 8am and 7pm Monday to Friday or between 9am and 1pm Saturday.

11.3 WaterSure tariff

If you have a water meter and use a large amount of water, you may be entitled to a reduction on your bill, if you satisfy the following government criteria.

Firstly, you or another member of your household must be receiving one of the following benefits/credits:

- Child Tax Credit (but not if you receive only the family element)
- Working Families Tax Credit
- Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance
- Housing Benefit
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income Support
- Pension Credit
- Universal Credit.

Secondly, either you, your child or another member of your household, suffers from a medical condition that requires significant additional use of water. Alternatively, you must have responsibility and be receiving child benefit for three or more children under 19 in full-time education.

Call us on **0800 027 0363** to talk to a specialist adviser if you think you're eligible. Further details can be found in our Household Charges Scheme leaflet available on request. Or complete an application online at southernwater.co.uk/difficulty-paying-your-bill.

11.4 Essentials tariff

For customers who receive their water supply from us

If you receive both water supply and sewerage services from us, you'll qualify for our Essentials tariff if your annual water services charges represent at least 3% of the total income for your household, after deducting council tax and housing costs.

If you receive only water supply services from us, you'll qualify for our Essentials tariff if your annual water supply charges represent at least 1.1% of the total income for your household, after deducting council tax and housing costs.

For customers who receive their water supply from another company

If you receive your water supply from another company and your wastewater services from us, and you've been accepted on to the financial assistance tariff provided by your water supply company, you'll automatically qualify for our Essentials tariff. Your water supply company will notify us if it accepts you on to its financial assistance tariff.

If your water company doesn't have a financial assistance tariff or you don't qualify for your water company's financial assistance tariff, you may still qualify for our Essentials tariff. In either case, you'll qualify if your wastewater charges represent at least 1.9% of the total income for your household, after deducting council tax and housing costs.

For households where occupants in the household are in receipt of Pension Credit

If members of your household receive Pension Credit, you'll automatically qualify for our Essentials tariff.

How to apply

Call us on: **0800 027 0363** or complete our financial assistance form at

<https://assistance.southernwater.co.uk/financialassistance>

To help us find out if you qualify for the tariff, you need to provide us with information about your household income, housing costs and the number of people living in your home.

How we can help you

Once we've found out if you qualify for assistance under our Essentials tariff, we'll provide you with a discount on the charges we make to you.

If we supply you with water, the amount will be based on how much of your household income you are spending on our charges. We call this your bill-to-income ratio.

If your water is supplied by another company and we only provide you with wastewater services, we'll provide you with a 25% discount on your wastewater charges.

Assistance with your charges will start from the date you applied for our Essentials tariff and will remain in place for 12 months. We'll then review your circumstances to decide if the Essentials tariff should continue for another 12 months and a renewal notice will be sent to you, which you'll need to sign and send back to us.

11.5 Our NewStart scheme

To help customers in severe financial difficulty, we operate our NewStart Scheme. If you haven't made a payment within 22 months you may qualify, provided you start and maintain regular instalment payments.

To be considered for this scheme, we need to carry out a full income and expenditure analysis with you. For further details, call us on **0800 027 0363** or visit southernwater.co.uk/difficulty-paying-your-bill or <https://assistance.southernwater.co.uk/financialassistance> to complete an application.

11.6 Water Direct scheme

If you owe us money and are receiving Income Support, Income Related Employment and Support Allowance, Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance or Pension Credit, the Department for Work and Pensions may agree to Water Direct payments being deducted from your benefit and paid directly to us to cover your water bill.

Contact us on **0800 027 0363** or email payless@southernwater.co.uk and explain your circumstances to our trained team. They'll take your details and make an application on your behalf. Alternatively visit southernwater.co.uk/difficulty-paying-your-bill to complete and submit the relevant application form. You may also wish to contact your local Department for Work and Pensions office directly.

Paying this way means:

- You pay in a convenient way at no extra cost.
- You won't have to remember to make payments.

If you're in any doubt, get in touch with the Department for Work and Pensions, in the first instance, to see if you might be eligible to claim any benefit(s). It won't be able to offer you financial assistance, but may be able to provide support in other ways.

11.7 What else can I do?

If you're worried about household bills in general, it may help to get in touch with an independent advice agency, such as:

Citizens Advice Bureau

The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) is an independent charity, which provides free, confidential and impartial advice on a wide range of problems. Expert advisers can help you with your debts and are able to negotiate repayment plans with your creditors. If you have other problems, such as illness, redundancy or divorce, the adviser may be able to help or tell you where you can get further advice. To find your nearest CAB visit: citizensadvice.org.uk

Step Change

Step Change helps people to manage their debts, offering tailored advice and practical solutions. The advice it provides is effective, confidential and free. For further details, call **0800 138 1111** or visit: stepchange.org.

National Debt line

National Debt line is a helpline for people with debt problems. The service is free, confidential and independent and advisers can assist with drawing up a personal budget and negotiating with creditors. For further details call **0808 808 4000** or visit: nationaldebtline.co.uk.

Other assistance

Some Money Advice Centres, which can be found in your local phone book, provide a similar free debt counselling service. You can also get in touch with the Department for Work and Pensions to see if you might be eligible to claim any benefit(s). It won't be able to give you financial assistance, but may be able to provide support in other ways.

If you've already contacted other organisations and they're advising you, please let us know. We can put the debt recovery process on hold for 30 days, with the possibility of a further extension of 30 days, once you have contacted a recognised agency.

12 Customers with individual needs

12.1 Priority needs register

You're entitled to expect high standards of service from us. We always try to give all our customers the best of care. However, we know the elderly or disabled, for example, may have extra needs and concerns.

To help us provide everyone with the best possible service, we keep a confidential register of customers who have individual needs. The register makes sure our employees know about any special circumstances. We also provide the following services free of charge:

- Information in large print or Braille
- Talking bills
- Audio tapes/CDs: letters, leaflets or bills can be converted into this format
- The option to send bills to friends or carers
- Frequent water meter-reading service
- Special phone service for people who use 'text' phones or 'typetalk'
- A priority service for people who use a kidney dialysis machine at home and those with disabilities
- Advice on water efficiency and special water appliances in your home
- Password scheme.

To join our Priority Needs Register, contact us:

By phone

0800 027 0800 – Monday to Friday from 8am to 7pm and Saturday 9am to 1pm
Calls from BT landlines are free but charges from mobiles or other service providers may vary.

By Minicom text telephone

0330 303 1265 (service for the deaf and hard of hearing) – Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm.

By fax

On 0203 047 9147

Online:

southernwater.co.uk/register-for-individual-needs

By writing to us:

Southern Water, PO Box 41, Worthing, West Sussex BN13 3NZ

13 Complaints

We always aim to provide excellent service, but sometimes we get things wrong. When we do, we need to know so that we can put things right.

The procedure we follow for dealing with complaints has been approved by our regulator, Ofwat.

If your complaint is regarding a billing issue, we'll ensure no recovery action is taken while we investigate. There may also be occasions, particularly with operational complaints, where we may need further information. Where possible, we'll try to resolve your complaint by calling you to discuss the matter. We'll always offer to follow this up in writing and to send you a complaints procedure leaflet in the post. Where we cannot reach you to discuss the matter, we'll write to you within 10 working days.

13.1 Customer information

Information on how to contact us is sent out with our bills, including the address, email and number of our Customer Service Centre. See **Section 2.2**.

We also have a complaints procedure leaflet, which explains the process taken by our teams in full. This can also be viewed at: southernwater.co.uk/complaints-procedure. Alternatively, you can call **0330 303 0277** and request a copy. The contact details for CCWater are also included on this leaflet.

13.2 Special arrangements

We have a special needs register which enables us to extend our customer care initiatives to complaints procedures. These are fully described in **Section 12** and are aimed at helping elderly people, those with disabilities and vulnerable customers.

Whenever we're advised by customers of their individual needs and special requirements, we update our register to help us provide a more meaningful response.

13.3 Complaints and timescales

Our process means your complaint will be directed to our Customer Relations team. However, we know that customers may complain to any of our employees, at any time, so everyone is required to forward complaints directly to Customer Relations.

All complaints, whether received in writing, by email, phone or personal contact are logged at time of receipt and provided with an individual monitoring control record.

Our system ensures that we record:

- Your name and address
- The nature of your complaint
- The date your complaint was sent to us
- The date we received it

- The latest date by which we may respond
- The person who received the complaint
- The person who is handling the complaint
- The type of response required
- The mechanism for ensuring the complaint is recorded as completed.

Written complaints are monitored to ensure they're handled within the timescales required under the Guaranteed Standards Scheme, or sooner. These are fully described in **Section 14**.

13.4 What we'll do to put things right

We aim to provide high-quality, efficient and helpful services. However, we may make a mistake. If we do, we'll explain to you what went wrong, put things right and apologise. We'll review each case individually and provide any appropriate compensation in a professional and timely manner.

13.5 If you have a complaint

If you have a complaint about your water bill, water supply or the sewers, the quickest way to resolve it is to call us on **0330 303 0223**.

If you'd prefer, you can write to the Customer Relations Manager: Southern Water, PO Box 41, Worthing, West Sussex BN13 3NZ.

13.6 A fresh look

If you've written to us and don't agree with our response, you can talk to a manager who'll review your case with you. To arrange this, please call **0330 303 0118** – Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

Ultimately, if we're unable to resolve the issue, you can contact the Consumer Council for Water. See **Section 13.7**.

13.7 Independent assessment

If you've followed our complaints process but are still unhappy, the Consumer Council for Water (CCWater) offers free independent advice. Visit ccwater.org.uk, call **0300 034 2222** or write: Consumer Council for Water c/o 1st Floor, Victoria Square House, Victoria Square, Birmingham B2 4AJ.

CCWater will investigate your complaint and the way we've dealt with it. Please make sure you've followed our complaints process first, otherwise CCWater will pass the complaint back to us.

13.8 Unresolved complaints

In the event that your complaint remains unresolved after CCWater's review or investigation, CCWater will provide you with details of how to apply to WATRS for a final independent adjudication on your complaint. Information about the scheme can be obtained at: watsr.org. Alternatively, you can write to: WATRS, International Dispute Resolution Centre, 70 Fleet Street, London EC4Y 1EU.

You can't apply to WATRS until after CCWater has issued a deadlock letter.

13.9 Arbitration

Details of disputes that can be referred to arbitration are given in **Section 15**.

13.10 Employee training and monitoring

Employees who are in regular contact with our customers receive in-house training on customer care. A dedicated and permanent training unit has been established in our Customer Service Centre.

Our staff are trained to be courteous, to give their names at the start of any conversation and to listen to customers' needs. All letters to customers give the name of the person who has handled the complaint and a named contact.

Appraisals and retraining are continuous activities within the Customer Service Centre.

Our employees are monitored daily to ensure our response to customers is correct and within the strict guidelines we set down.

Customer Service Centre staff are empowered to resolve complaints directly and we honour the commitments they make on our behalf.

13.11 Audit of responses

We audit our own responses through the reports we make to our directors.

The returns we submit to Ofwat in June of each year are independently assessed. This assessment certifies both the performance we've achieved and the level of confidence of the data we've submitted.

Complaints' data is an integral part of our internal business plan and a performance monitor for the business.

The customer feedback we receive via the complaints procedure forms an important part of our continuous improvement process. We analyse the reasons why customers have complained and, where appropriate, look to improve our processes to prevent the same thing happening again.

14 Guaranteed standards

14.1 Our guarantee to customers

Our aim is to provide a high level of service at all times. However, with more than 1.5 million customer contacts a year, there will inevitably be occasional problems.

This section emphasises our commitment to our household customers and details the minimum standards of service you can expect in our main areas of business together with the action we'll take. We also explain any compensation we'll pay, where appropriate, if we fail to meet the minimum standards. This is a statutory requirement and in many cases the commitments we've made go beyond the minimum requirements of the GSS scheme.

GSS will be paid in accordance with Ofwat Guidance, which may be found at: ofwat.gov.uk/households/supply-and-standards/standards-of-service/.

14.2 Water supply

Meter relocation

For elderly customers and those with individual needs who are having difficulty reading their meter and would like it relocated, we'll carry out a free survey. If it's possible to move the meter we'll move it free of charge. If we're unable to move it, we'll let you know why.

For customers who are unable to read their meter themselves or want to monitor their consumption, we can provide a regular meter read service, four times a year.

Supply interruptions

If we have to carry out planned work, which involves interrupting your water supply for more than four hours, we'll let you know at least 48 hours before the interruption and let you know when we expect the supply to be restored.

If we fail to correctly notify you of the interruption or if the supply is not restored within the stated time, we'll credit your water services account with £25.

Unplanned interruptions

Clearly we can't notify you before an unplanned interruption, such as those caused by a burst water main, but we aim to restore your supply within 12 hours or, in the case of a strategic trunk main, within 48 hours. If the interruption extends beyond that time, we'll automatically compensate you for this and each additional period of 24 hours during which the interruption continues.

If we believe the interruption period is going to be significant, where possible, we'll arrange an alternative supply.

If we fail to restore the supply within 12 hours (or 48 hours in the case of a strategic trunk main), we'll credit your account with £25. A further credit of £10 will be made for each additional period of 24 hours during which the interruption continues.

It can be difficult to identify all properties affected by an interruption. If you've been affected by an interruption but we've not contacted you, you'll need to make a claim either verbally or in writing

within three months following the date the supply was interrupted or cut off (see **Section 2** for our contact details) to obtain any compensation due.

If you know we were aware that you'd been affected by an interruption, you may be entitled to a further penalty payment of £20 if we fail to advise you within 20 working days of the date of the interruption about the compensation due.

If you experience three or more unplanned interruptions lasting more than 15 hours in total within a 12-month period, you can claim £25.

Low water pressure

If, due to unplanned events, you experience significant low pressure (less than seven metres head) for more than one hour on two separate occasions within a 28-day period, we'll credit your water services account with £25.

As it can be difficult to identify all properties affected by low water pressure, you should make a claim to ensure you receive this compensation. All claims must be made in writing within three months of the second incident.

14.3 Water quality

We act immediately if we discover quality problems in your water supply. If you complain about our water making you ill, we'll contact you within two hours of receiving the complaint to arrange for the water at your tap to be tested.

However, if your complaint relates to another water quality matter, we'll contact you within one working day and arrange a visit, if required.

After sampling at your premises we'll call you with the results for basic quality tests within two working days, if you've given us a contact number. For those occasions where, due to regulatory requirements, we need to carry out a more complex analysis, we'll confirm our findings in writing within 10 working days.

If we fail to meet these timescales we'll credit your account with £25.

Discolouration

Very occasionally you may find that your water supply is a brownish colour. This discolouration is often caused by work being carried out on ageing iron mains and, although unsightly, poses no health risk.

If laundry is stained because of water discolouration due to our mains, we'll compensate you for the cost of the affected items. If other damage is caused we'll pay you appropriate compensation.

Replacement of lead pipes

We have a policy of replacing lead company pipes and encourage our customers to replace any lead water pipes that they own (see **Note 1, Section 3.13**).

Customers are responsible for the pipe that runs between the boundary of the street and their property – this is referred to as the supply pipe. We're responsible for that part of the pipe between the water main and the boundary of the street in which the water main is laid – this is referred to as the communication pipe. If you are replacing your lead supply pipe, we'll replace our

communication pipe at the same time, free of charge, provided you give us 15 working days' notice. If we fail to do so we'll credit your water services account with £25.

14.4 Wastewater

Sewer flooding – general

We'll aim to respond to a report of sewer flooding within two hours of the first report of flooding entering a property (internal) and within four hours if flooding is outside a property (external). We'll also provide a full clean-up service where possible within 12 hours (internal flooding) or within 24 hours (external flooding).

Sewer flooding – internal and external

If your premises is/are internally flooded due to a failure of our drainage system, we'll credit your water services account with an amount equivalent to your last two years' annual wastewater charges, subject to a minimum of £150.

We'll write to you within 20 working days of the incident, enclosing details of your payment.

If we fail to credit your water services account within 20 working days of the incident, you'll be entitled to an additional payment of £20.

If your property is flooded externally due to a failure of our drainage system, you may claim an amount equivalent to half your annual sewerage charges, subject to a minimum of £75 and a maximum of £500.

You must make a claim within three months of the incident and provide information to prove you were materially affected by the flooding incident. Claim forms are available on request from the Customer Service Centre or can be downloaded at southernwater.co.uk/media/default/PDFs/ExternalFlooding_ClaimForm.pdf

We'll write to you within 20 working days of receiving your substantiated claim enclosing details of your payment.

If we fail to credit your water services account within 20 working days of receiving your claim, you will be entitled to an additional payment of £20.

If you experience internal and external flooding in one incident, the payment you are entitled to will be calculated based on internal flooding.

Payments will not apply if:

- the flooding happened because of exceptional weather conditions or industrial action
- the flooding was caused by a customer's actions or any defect, blockage or inadequacy in the customer's drain or sewers
- you notified us more than three months after your property was flooded.

14.5 Customer Services

Billing queries

We aim to respond to written queries about your water services account within five working days. If we fail to respond to a written query regarding the correctness of our charges within 10 working days of receiving it, we'll credit your water services account with £25.

If we fail to credit your water services account within 10 working days of our reply, you'll be entitled to a further credit of £10.

Payment arrangements

We'll respond to a request to change your payment arrangements within five working days of receiving your request. If we can't agree to the request and fail to meet this standard, we'll credit your water services account with £25.

If we fail to credit your water services account within 10 working days of our reply, you'll be entitled to a further credit of £10.

Incorrectly issued county court claims

If we incorrectly issue a county court claim against you for a debt that you're not liable for and for which you've previously informed us that you're not liable, we'll correct the situation, withdraw the fees and costs and credit your water services account with £150.

Debt collection

In some circumstances, we refer customers' debts to debt collection agencies. The agencies we use are registered with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and are members of the Credit Services Association and subject to its code of practice. We also audit these companies' policies and procedures on an annual basis. In the unlikely event that a debt is pursued this way in error or the debt collection agent acts improperly, we'll credit your water services account with £25.

Registration of a default against the customer credit file

In some circumstances we register a default against customers' credit files held by credit reference agencies. In the unlikely event that a debt is registered in error, we'll correct the situation and credit your water account with £25.

Written complaints

We aim to make a full response to a written complaint within five working days of receiving your letter. If we fail to respond within 10 working days we'll credit your water services account with £25.

If we fail to credit your water services account within 10 working days of our reply, you'll be entitled to a further credit of £10.

Access to property

Where we're carrying out works and need access to your property, we'll agree the timing and any specific access requirements in advance. Failure to consult will result in a £25 credit to your account in respect of each affected property.

Appointments

When we need to visit you at your premises and it's necessary for you to be present, we'll let you know whether we'll visit before or after 1pm. You can then request the visit within a two-hour period. If we don't keep the appointment as made, we'll credit your water services account with £50.

We aim to meet all our appointment times. If we can't for some reason, we'll let you know at least 24 hours in advance. If we fail to make the appointment or cancel the appointment with less than 24 hours' notice, we'll credit your water services account with £50. Payments will not apply if the appointment is cancelled with less than 24 hours' notice because of circumstances beyond our control, for example extreme weather conditions, strikes or the actions of a third party.

If we fail to credit your water services account within 10 working days of the missed appointment date, you'll be entitled to an additional credit of £10.

14.6 Additional standards

In addition to the Guaranteed Standards Scheme, we also make the following provisions for the imposition of water restrictions.

We'll do our utmost to safeguard your water supply and try to avoid having to impose water restrictions or the use of standpipes in times of drought. Unfortunately, in exceptional circumstances it may be impossible to avoid such restrictions.

If your supply of water for essential domestic purposes is interrupted, or cut off as a result of an emergency restriction authorised by a drought order (other than through exceptional drought circumstances, which couldn't have been avoided), we'll credit your water services account with £10 per day, subject to a maximum of our average water bill for the previous year.

Ofwat will make the final decision on any dispute on this issue.

Temporary Use Bans

Commonly referred to as TUBs, these are powers granted to water companies to impose restrictions on customers' water use. Previously these were referred to as hosepipe bans in the Water Industry Act 1991, but they were modified in 2010 under the Flood and Water Management Act to cover a wider range of restrictions.

The circumstances in which water companies may exercise these powers are not expressly linked to drought.

Before imposing a temporary hosepipe ban, a water company has to be satisfied that a serious deficiency of water available for distribution exists or is threatened. With drought orders and drought permits we also need to make sure that the actual or threatened water deficiency is because of an exceptional shortage of rain.

TUBs may be imposed by water companies under their own powers in Section 76 (2) of the Water Industry Act 1991 (as amended by section 36 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and The Water Use (Temporary Bans) Order 2010) and do not require the prior approval of the Secretary of State/National Assembly for Wales or the Environment Agency.

The scope of the powers water companies may exercise under this section is limited to prohibiting the following uses of water:

- Watering a garden using a hosepipe
- Cleaning a private motor-vehicle using a hosepipe
- Watering plants on household or other non-household premises using a hosepipe
- Cleaning a private leisure boat using a hosepipe
- Filling or maintaining a domestic swimming or paddling pool
- Drawing water, using a hosepipe, for domestic recreational use
- Filling or maintaining a domestic pond using a hosepipe
- Filling or maintaining an ornamental fountain
- Cleaning walls, or windows, of household premises using a hosepipe
- Cleaning paths or patios using a hosepipe
- Cleaning other artificial outdoor surfaces using a hosepipe.

TUBs only apply to water taken from the mains supply.

In a worsening drought, simple supply and demand management measures are not always enough. Water companies may have to take additional steps by applying to the Environment Agency for a Drought Permit or to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs/National Assembly for Wales for a Drought Order.

In July 2005 Defra, the Welsh Assembly and the Environment Agency updated a booklet providing information about the process for obtaining drought orders and drought permits. It has also produced updated guidance providing information about the process for obtaining drought orders and drought permits in 2015 at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/apply-for-a-drought-permit-drought-order-or-emergency-drought-order>.

Drought orders and permits provide a temporary mechanism for managing water resources limited by an exceptional shortage of rain. They're a water resources management tool and exist to help avoid risk to public water supplies while providing the best possible protection for the environment.

14.7 Disputes

If we're unable to agree your entitlement to a payment or credit you can refer the matter to: The Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat), Centre City Tower, 7 Hill Street, Birmingham B5 4UA. It may call for all relevant information and will then determine the dispute.

Your legal rights

A claim of payment or credit under this scheme doesn't affect any other legal right to compensation you may have and doesn't form an admission on our part as to liability in the event of any legal or other proceedings taking place.

15 Arbitration

Under the Water Industry Act 1991, some disputes between customers and Southern Water may be decided by an arbitrator, to be agreed between the two parties.

In some cases the costs of the arbitration may be payable by whichever party is unsuccessful in the dispute.

Those disputes that can be referred to arbitration are:

Water meters

Any dispute in respect of the exercise of our powers to carry out the installation of a water meter, compensation or the apportionment of expenses.

Compensation arising from streetworks

Any dispute about possible compensation due following work we've carried out in your street.

Unresolved Complaints

See **Section 13.8**.

16 Disputes determined by Ofwat

Under the Water Industry Act 1991, some disputes between customers and us can be referred by either of us to Ofwat for determination.

These are:

New connections to water mains and associated works

- Whether any security for the expenses we expect to incur was reasonably required.
- Whether our expenses were incurred reasonably.
- Whether conditions relating to separate supplies and metering are reasonable.

The requirement for your property to have a separate supply pipe

- Whether our requirement for your property to have a single supply service pipe is reasonable.

The terms and conditions of metering

- Any dispute about any terms and conditions we apply as a condition of connecting your supply to the mains to allow us to install a water meter and we can't agree on the appointment of an arbitrator.
- Any dispute about whether it's possible or practical to fix charges by reference to volume of water supplied or where the company would incur unreasonable expense.

Requirement to maintain pressure and supply

- Any dispute about our requirement as to the effectiveness of the capacity of your water tank before we will connect your water supply.

Adoption of sewers or sewage disposal works

- An appeal against our proposal or refusal to adopt a sewer or works or about the conditions imposed.

Connecting private sewers and drains to public sewers

- Any question as to the reasonableness of our refusal to allow the connection or our requirement to inspect your drain or sewer before allowing connection or about the costs and security we require you to pay.
- Whether an estimate of the cost of our works or the requirement of security is reasonable.

Power to alter a private drainage system

- Where we intend to close your private drainage system, an appeal about the position or sufficiency of the replacement drain or sewer.

Power to close or restrict the use of a public sewer

- Any dispute about the effectiveness of an alternative sewer provided to replace an existing one which is due to be closed.

Terms and conditions for the adoption of water mains – self-lay

- Before work commences: Any dispute about the terms and conditions for agreement for the adoption of mains laid by a contractor.
- On completion of works: Any dispute on financial arrangements, for example, build rate/income assessment etc.

Terms and conditions for requisitioned water mains/sewers/lateral drains

- Any dispute about the financial terms for the provision of mains/sewers or lateral drains, the timescale for provision or route proposed.

Request to move company pipework

- Dispute about the reasonableness of any refusal to move company pipework in response to a request to do so by you as the affected landowner.

New water mains

- If you requisition a new water main, any dispute in respect of the amount we require you to pay, the undertakings or securities we require you to give, where we will lay the main for your connection or the period within which we will lay the main.

New public sewers

- If you requisition a new public sewer, any dispute in respect of the amount we require you to pay, the undertakings or securities we require you to give, where we will lay the sewer for your connection or the period within which we will lay the sewer.

Exercise of works on private land

- Any dispute about the manner in which we have undertaken work on private land.

Guaranteed standards of service scheme

- Any dispute about a failure to meet one of our Guaranteed Standards of Service and any dispute whether or not you are entitled to a compensation payment under the Guaranteed Standards of Service scheme.

Ofwat can be contacted at: The Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat), Centre City Tower, 7 Hill Street, Birmingham B5 4UA.

17 Office opening hours

Enquiries may be made by phone at the following times:

- Billing enquiries: **0330 303 0277** – Monday to Friday, 8am to 7pm, and Saturday, 8.30am to 2pm.
- Minicom (for the deaf and hard of hearing): **0330 303 1265** – Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm.
- Financial assistance: **0800 027 0363** – Monday to Friday, 8am to 7pm, and Saturday, 9am to 1pm.
- Water or wastewater (operational issues): **0330 303 0368** – Monday to Friday, 8am to 7pm, and Saturday, 9am to 1pm.
- Emergency operational issues: **0330 303 0368** – 24-hours a day, 365 days a year.
- To apply for a meter: **0330 303 1262** – Monday to Friday, 8am to 7pm, and Saturday, 8.30am to 2pm.

To join our special needs register

Call **0800 027 0800** (free from landlines and mobiles) – Monday to Friday, 8am to 7pm, and Saturday, 8.30am to 2pm or use our Minicom line, as shown above.

18 General

The contents of this code don't form part of a contract and don't create a contract between us and any of our customers.

The contents of this code are not intended to be in conflict with any relevant regulations made under the Water Industry Act 1991 or other legislation. In the event of any apparent conflict, the provisions of the regulations or legislation will prevail. You won't be able to claim payment or credit under both this code and any relevant regulations to the extent that the code and the regulations apply to similar matters

The Water Industry Act also gives you the right, in certain circumstances, to take legal proceedings against us for any loss or damage caused to you by our failing to comply with certain of our duties under the act.