

Our promise to you

Guaranteed standards for household customers

For more information, visit
➤ southernwater.co.uk



Our aim at Southern Water is to provide a high level of service at all times. However, with more than 1.5 million customer contacts a year, three thousand works and pumping stations and a vast network of water mains and sewers, there will inevitably be occasional problems.

This document, 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 will take and, where appropriate, any compensation we will pay you if we don't deliver on our promises.

Water supply

Meter relocation

For elderly customers and those with additional needs who are having difficulty reading their meter and would like it relocated, we will carry out a free survey. If it is possible to move the meter we will move it free of charge. If we are unable to move it, we will let you know why. For customers who are unable to read their meter themselves or want to monitor their consumption we can provide a service whereby we read their meter four times a year.

Supply interruptions

Planned: If we have to carry out planned work which involves interrupting your water supply for more than 4 hours, we will let you know at least 48 hours before the interruption will happen and 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 in the stated time, we will credit your water services account with £25.

Unplanned: Clearly we cannot notify you before an unplanned interruption such as a burst, but we aim to restore your supply within 12 hours or, in the case of a large mains burst, within 48 hours. If the interruption extends beyond that we will 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, we will, where possible, arrange an alternative supply.

If we fail to restore the supply within 12 hours (or 48 hours in the case of a large mains burst), we will credit your water services account with £25. Another payment 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. In case you have been affected by an interruption but Southern Water has not contacted you, to obtain any compensation due you must make a claim either verbally or in writing within three months following the date on which the supply was interrupted or cut-off.

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

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 for more than one hour on two separate occasions within a 28-day period, we will 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 occasion.

Water quality

We act immediately if we discover quality problems in your water supply. If you complain about our water making you ill we will 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 will contact you within one working day and arrange a visit if required.

After sampling the water at your premises we will call you with the results for basic quality tests within two working days, if you have given us a contact number. For those occasions where, due to regulating requirements we need to do more complex analysis, we will confirm our findings in writing within 10 working days. If we fail to meet these timescales we will credit your water services account with £25.

Discoloration

Very occasionally you may find that your water supply is a brownish colour. This discoloration 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 discoloration due to our mains we will compensate you the cost of the affected items. If other damage is caused we will 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. 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. Southern Water is 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 will 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 will credit your water services account with £25.

Wastewater

Sewer flooding - general

Normally we will respond to a complaint 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 will 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 are internally flooded due to a failure of our drainage system, we will make a payment to you of an amount equivalent to your last two years' annual sewerage charges, from a minimum of £150 for each incident.

We will write to you within 20 working days of the incident enclosing details of your payment and informing you of any action we plan to take and any investigations we intend to carry out.

If we fail to make a payment either by sending you a cheque or by crediting your account within 20 working days of the incident, you will 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 - £75 minimum, up to 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 from our website.

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

If we fail to either send you a cheque or credit your 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.

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 will credit your water services account with £25.

If we fail to credit your account within 10 working days of our reply, you will be entitled to a further penalty payment of £10.

Payment arrangements

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

If we fail to credit your account within 10 working days of our reply, you will be entitled to a further penalty payment of £10.

Incorrectly issued County Court judgement

If we incorrectly issue a County Court judgement against you in respect of a debt for which you are not liable, and for which you have previously informed us that you are not liable, we will 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 Office of Fair Trading and are members of the Credit Services Association and subject to its code of practice. Southern Water also audits 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 will 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 pursued this way in error, we will correct the situation and credit your water service account with £15.

Customer Services

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 will credit your water services account with £25.

If we fail to send you a refund cheque or credit your account within 10 working days of our reply, you will be entitled to a further penalty payment of £10.

Access to property

Where Southern Water is undertaking works and require you to provide access to your property we will agree the timing and any specific access requirements in advance. Failure to consult will result in a £25 payment in respect of each affected property.

Appointments

When we need to visit you at your premises and it is necessary for you to be present, we will advise you whether we will visit either before or after 1pm. You can then request the visit in a two-hour period. If we do not keep the appointment as made, we will credit your water services account with £50.

Southern Water aims to meet all its appointment times. If we cannot, we will 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 will 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 account within 10 working days of the missed appointment date, you will be entitled to an additional compensation of £10

If you would like any further information please contact:

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PO Box 41
Worthing
BN13 3NZ

Telephone:

0330 303 0277

Minicom:

0330 303 1265

www.southernwater.co.uk