



Are you being served?

The level of service household consumers should expect from their water company



CONSUMER COUNCIL FOR



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You have no choice over which company supplies your water and sewerage services. So it is important that you feel satisfied with the service you get from your local company. The Consumer Council for Water represent your interests and is working to raise standards within the industry. We know that consumers are often not sure what level of service they can reasonably expect to receive. So we have set out a simple guide for you to use to compare your company's performance. If you are not satisfied with the service you are getting, challenge the company concerned.

Contacting the company

There are times when you will need to contact your local water company, for example if you change your address.



You should find your company's contact details on their bills, in the phone book and on their web-sites. There should be an out-of-hours phone number for emergencies.

The company should make sure that you are dealt with promptly by suitably trained employees who do all they can to help you. The people you are in contact with should always be polite and professional and act in line with their company's published policies and procedures. You should be left feeling confident that the matter has been dealt with, and that your individual needs have been taken into account.

The company should give you extra help if you have special needs in relation to the services provided or in communicating with the company. If you are not sure, ask your company if there is any extra service they can offer you.

Water supply

You should receive a continuous supply of water at a consistently adequate pressure.

Your water supply has to meet very strict quality standards and should look, taste and smell fit for drinking.

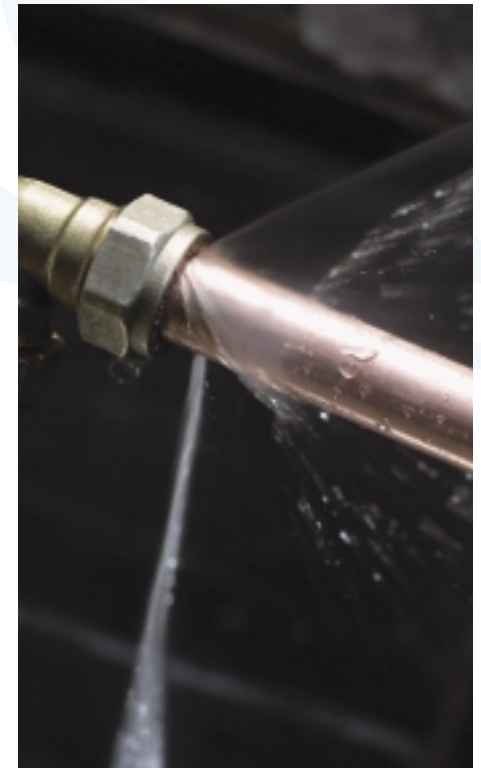
If you have worries over any part of your water supply, your local company should be able to offer you information and advice and a free testing service.

Supply interruptions

The company should give you at least 48 hours' written notice if they plan to turn off your supply to carry out engineering work, and tell you when your supply will be restored.

If there is a burst main, the company should be able to tell you when they are likely to be able to restore your supply.

If an unplanned interruption is likely to take a long time to sort out, the company should let you know about the situation and provide accessible supplies. In most straightforward cases, you should expect to get the supply back within four hours when the interruption happens during normal working hours. It may take longer out of hours.



Leaks

If you believe there is a leak on your pipe outside your house and you contact the company, they should offer prompt help to find the leak and provide help in carrying out the repair. If you have a meter, when your first leak happens the company should make an allowance on your bill for the water you have reported having leaked. You may need a new pipe if you have repeated leaks and many companies already offer practical or financial help in these circumstances. You should ask your company.



Water meters

You can ask to have a water meter fitted free of charge. If it is not economic to do so, the company should offer to put you on another charge which more closely reflects the amount of water you use.

If you ask to have a meter installed but decide that you want to go back to the unmeasured rateable value charge, you can do so before the end of the first year.

If your home is metered, the company should read the meter at least once a

year. You should have access to be able to read the meter yourself to check your bills and keep an eye on how much you are using.

Charges and billing

The company should be able to give you enough information about their charges scheme to make sure you are fully aware of the choices and options available to you.

The charges cover the water supply, sewerage services, highway drainage and, in some cases, draining surface water.

You should be able to easily understand from your bill what you are paying for and how much you are being charged.

If you are having any difficulty paying your bills the company should be able to offer you advice and agree a suitable payment arrangement for you. If you dispute the amount of the bill, the company should investigate your concerns so that you are confident you are being charged correctly.

Some people on meters can get financial help if they receive specific benefits or tax credits and cannot avoid using a lot of water because they have three or more dependent children or a medical condition specified by the Government. Contact your company for more details.

Sewerage services

If you have a drainage problem, your local sewerage company should offer prompt advice on how you can sort the problem out. If it is not clear whether the problem relates to your drains or the public sewers, the company should send someone to investigate.

If a problem with the company's sewerage system has resulted in your property being flooded with sewage, the company should, as a matter of urgency, send a team out to clear this up. The company should let you know the outcome of any investigations into the incident, and give details of the

planned action to reduce the risk of repeat flooding and a date of when this will happen.

If something does go wrong

Even with the best companies, things can occasionally go wrong. If you are unhappy with the level of service you receive, or there has been a service failure, complain to the company concerned. There is a formal complaints procedure that means your complaint will be dealt with appropriately. If you are unable to resolve it, let us know.

We are here to help you.



Your region's Consumer Council for Water office

- If you call (on the phone number or 0845 number) outside office hours, you can leave a message on our answerphone
- If you are a minicom user, you can contact us on 0121 345 1044

Consumer Council for Water Midlands – for consumers of Severn Trent Water and South Staffordshire Water

Victoria Square House
Victoria Square
Birmingham B2 4AJ
tel: 0121 345 1013
local rate: 08457 023953
fax: 0121 345 1010
email: midlands@ccwater.org.uk
office hours: 8.30 to 4.30, Monday to Friday

Consumer Council for Water South West – for consumers of South West Water

First Floor
Broadwalk House
Southernhay West
Exeter EX1 1TS
tel: 01392 428028
local rate: 08457 959059
fax: 01392 428010
email: southwest@ccwater.org.uk
office hours: 8.30 to 4.30, Monday to Friday

Consumer Council for Water Eastern – for consumers of Anglian Water, Cambridge Water, Essex and Suffolk Water and Tendring Hundred Water

Ground Floor
Carlyle House
Carlyle Road
Cambridge CB4 3DN
tel: 01223 323889
local rate: 08457 959369
fax: 01223 323930
email: eastern@ccwater.org.uk
office hours: 8.30 to 4.30, Monday to Friday

Consumer Council for Water Thames – for consumers of Thames Water, Three Valleys Water, Sutton and East Surrey Water

Fourth Floor (South)
High Holborn House
52/54 High Holborn
London WC1V 6RL
tel: 020 7831 4790
local rate: 08457 581658
fax: 020 7831 4850
email: thames@ccwater.org.uk
office hours: 9 to 5, Monday to Friday

Consumer Council for Water Northumbria – for consumers of Northumbrian Water and Hartlepool Water

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Northgate House
St Augustine's Way
Darlington DL1 1XA

tel: 01325 464222
local rate: 08457 089367
fax: 01325 369269
email: northumbria@ccwater.org.uk
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Consumer Council for Water Wales – for consumers of Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water and Dee Valley Water

Room 140
Caradog House
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Cardiff CF10 3BE
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Consumer Council for Water North West – for consumers of United Utilities Water

Suite 902
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Bridgewater House
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Manchester M1 6LT
tel: 0161 236 6112
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fax: 0161 228 6117
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Consumer Council for Water Wessex – for consumers of Wessex Water, Bournemouth and West Hampshire Water, Bristol Water and Cholderton and District Water

2 The Hide Market
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email: wessex@ccwater.org.uk
office hours: 8.30 to 4.30, Monday to Friday

Consumer Council for Water Southern – for consumers of Southern Water, Folkestone & Dover Water, Mid Kent Water, Portsmouth Water and South East Water

Fourth Floor (South)
High Holborn House
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fax: 020 7831 7253
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office hours: 9 to 5, Monday to Friday

Consumer Council for Water Yorkshire – for consumers of Yorkshire Water

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