

Our Customer Promise

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In this leaflet we explain our promises and what you should expect from us. Some of these are based on standards set by Government; we see these as a minimum requirement and, in many instances, have improved on these or introduced additional standards demonstrating our commitment to providing excellent service.

Our codes of practice are approved by the industry regulator, Ofwat. A list of other codes can be found on the back of this leaflet. They can be downloaded from our website or you can contact us to get a free copy.

What standards of service do you provide?

We guarantee to provide the following standards of service in our day-to-day dealings with you, subject to the exceptions specified.

If we fail to achieve any of standards 1 to 4, we will automatically pay you £20 within 10 working days, or credit £20 to your account if it is in arrears. If payment is not made within 10 working days we will automatically pay you a further £20.

1. Keeping appointments

When we make an appointment with you in writing or by telephone, we will as a minimum tell you whether we will visit in the morning (8am-1pm) or in the afternoon (12pm-5pm) or you can ask for an appointment within a two hour time-band.

Where possible we will set a time for an appointment for which we will not be late by more than 30 minutes.

We will keep the appointment made and if we have to change it we will give you at least 24 hours notice.

2. Account queries

We will reply within 10 working days of receiving a written query about the correctness of your water or sewerage account.

3. Payment arrangements

If you notify us in writing that you wish to change your payment method, we will confirm to you within five working days if for any reason your request is not possible.

4. Complaints

We will issue a reply within 10 working days of receiving a written complaint.

5. Interruptions to your water supply

5a. Planned interruptions

If we plan to interrupt your water supply for more than two hours, we will give you at least 48 hours' written notice.

We will also let you know in writing the time by which your supply will be restored. If we fail to provide you with notice we will automatically pay you £20.

If we fail to restore your supply as notified we will automatically pay you £20, plus an additional £10 for each further 24 hour period the supply remains unrestored.

Payment will be made within 20 working days of the supply interruption. If we do not make a payment which we should have known was due to you, we will automatically make an additional payment of £20.

Where we did not identify that you were affected and were therefore unable to make an automatic payment, you can claim your payment within three months of the date on which your supply was interrupted.

5b. Emergency interruptions

If the public water supply to your home is unexpectedly interrupted (due to a burst main, for instance) or where we have to carry out emergency repairs affecting your water supply we will restore the supply within 12 hours of becoming aware of the interruption. If a strategic main (a large main supplying the area) causes the problem, the water supply will be restored within 48 hours of us finding out about the interruption.

If we fail to restore your supply within these time periods we will automatically pay you £20, plus an additional £10 for each further 24 hour period the supply remains unrestored.

Payment will be made within 20 working days of the supply interruption. If we do not make a payment which we should have known was due to you, we will automatically make an additional payment of £20.

Where we did not identify that you were affected and were therefore unable to make an automatic payment, you can claim your payment within three months of the date on which your supply was interrupted.

5c. Alternative water supplies

Where you experience a planned or an emergency interruption lasting more than 12 hours, we will provide an alternative source of water. If we fail to do this you can claim £20.

5d. Repeated burst mains

Where a water supply is interrupted three or more times in any 12 month period by a burst main, a payment of £10 may be claimed for the third and each subsequent supply interruption. A payment is not due where the burst main has been caused by third party damage.

6. Flooding from water mains

If the inside of your property is flooded as a result of a burst water main which is not your fault, we will provide a specialist clean up and drying service free of charge. We will also consider your claim for uninsured losses and other out of pocket expenses if you contact us at the time of the flooding.

7. Flooding from sewers

7a. Internal flooding

If we know that water has escaped from our sewers and entered the buildings of your property or passed beneath a suspended floor, we will, within 20 working days of the event, automatically make a payment equal to your annual sewerage charges for each incident of flooding from our sewer.

For metered customers we will calculate payments based on the previous year's consumption. The minimum payment made for each flooding from our sewer is £150 and the maximum payment is £1,000.

We will recommend locally based companies who are experts in dealing with property flooding to provide the specialist services that may be required, although you are free to make your own arrangements if you prefer.

Payment will be made within 20 working days of the internal flooding. If we do not make a payment which we should have known was due to you, we will automatically make an additional payment of £20.

Where we did not identify that you were affected and were therefore unable to make an automatic payment, you can claim your payment within three months of the date on which the flooding occurred.

7b. External flooding

If water escapes from our sewers and enters the boundary of your property you may be entitled to claim a compensation payment, if you believe you have been materially affected by the sewer flooding.

If we are notified that your property has been flooded we will visit and investigate. If the flooding appears to have come from our sewerage system, we will remedy the problem as quickly as possible and do our best to clean up any external sewage debris, and where appropriate provide you with a claim form.

Claim forms should be completed and returned to us within three months of the incident. If we agree that a payment is due, we will make a payment equal to 50% of your annual sewerage charges for each incident.

The minimum payment is £75 and the maximum is £500. For metered customers we will calculate payments based on the previous year's consumption. Any payment due will be made automatically within 20 working days of receipt of your form; otherwise we will automatically make an additional payment of £20.

7c. If either internal or external sewer flooding occurs due to exceptional weather conditions, we are not required to make any payment under this standard.

If you suffer loss or damage as a result of either internal or external sewer flooding please contact your insurance company as soon as possible as sewage flooding damage is covered by most building insurance policies.

If your property is flooded internally and externally we will make a payment under section 7a 'Internal flooding' only.

8. Replacement of lead service pipes

If you replace lead pipework for which you are responsible, we will replace any lead service pipe for which we are responsible free of charge.

Please provide us with at least four weeks' notice of your intention to replace your pipework so that we can arrange to work in the highway to replace our pipework.

Subject to highway restrictions and providing the required notice is given we will replace our section of pipe within 10 working days of you completing your work or at the time your new connections are taking place, should you prefer.

To claim a payment of £20 for any avoidable delay over 10 working days please call our Services Helpline.

9. 'Do not drink' or 'Do not use' notices

If we have cause to issue a 'Do not drink' notice as a precautionary measure to safeguard your health, as a result of problems with our supply, a £30 payment will be made to you.

In the unlikely event that the notice lasts more than seven days, we will make an additional payment of £15.

If we have cause to issue a 'Do Not Use' notice as a precautionary measure to safeguard your health, as a result of problems with our supply, a £50 payment will be made to you. In the unlikely event that the notice lasts more than seven days, we will make an additional payment of £15.

10. 'Boil water' notices

If we have cause to issue a 'Boil water' notice as a result of problems with our supply, we will make a payment of £15 to you. In the unlikely event that the notice lasts more than seven days, we will make an additional payment of £15.

11. Discoloured water

If you have a water meter and need to run off discoloured water, a credit will be placed on your account if you contact us at the time. Please call our Services Helpline and tell us that you are on a meter.

Generally we will compensate you for damage that is caused by discoloured water, for example stained washing or permanent staining of baths, hand basins or the cleaning of water tanks and heating systems where claims are agreed in advance of commitment.

When we pay compensation, the damaged goods will become the property of South West Water. Where water supplied by us is regularly heavily discoloured, compensation will be considered according to the severity and duration by a reduction of your annual water service charge of 10% for each month affected up to a maximum of 50%.

To make a claim for damage or reduction of charges, please call our Services Helpline.

12. Low pressure

Except when we need to carry out necessary works or during drought, we will ensure that there is a minimum pressure of seven metres static head in our section of the service pipe which connects your property to our main.

Where we are aware that the pressure has fallen below this level for one hour or more on two separate occasions in any 28 day period, we will automatically pay you £25. Only one payment of £25 will be made in any charging year. If we were unable to identify that you were affected, you can claim a payment within three months of the date of the second occasion.

13. Interruptions to your supply because of drought

Should we ever need to introduce standpipes or rota cuts under a Drought Order, we will make a payment of £35 to each customer for each day, or part of a day, that the water supply is interrupted. The maximum payment will not exceed the average amount paid by household customers for water in the previous year.

14. Working in the street

Except in emergencies we will always try to carry out work so that access to individual properties is not blocked. Where this cannot be avoided, we will let you know our plans in advance. If we do not, you can claim £10 by calling our Services Helpline.

For further details call our Services Helpline.

15. Money paid in error

If it is discovered that you have wrongly paid money for a service which we have not provided, we will refund all of the money paid for a period of up to 10 years before the mistake was discovered. Interest will also be included if the period in question was over 12 months.

This does not apply to surface water drainage rebates which are covered by separate guidelines set out by Ofwat, further details of which are available in our Household Charges Scheme.

16. Direct debits and standing orders

If we make an error in the handling of a direct debit or standing order payment, you can claim a refund for any bank charges incurred or financial loss on proof of the claim.

17. Receipts

Where you request a receipt for money paid to us, for water and sewerage charges, and we do not send you one within five working days, you can claim a payment of £10 by calling our Accounts Helpline.

18. Metered bills

If you have a water meter, your bill will be issued to you within three months of the end of the period which it covers (e.g. a bill for the period ending 28 June will be issued no later than 28 September). If it is not and a number of bills for different periods are issued to you at the same time, we will reduce the amount you have to pay. The maximum amount by which charges may be reduced is 50%.

19. Court claims

If we make an error or omission which causes a Court Claim to be issued against you incorrectly for non-payment of charges, we will pay you £100 and withdraw associated fees and costs.

Do I need to claim for a payment?

You will for some standards but others will be paid automatically. Please refer to the appropriate standard of service above. If you feel that you are entitled to a payment you have not received please call our Services Helpline or write to us.

Are there any exceptions?

Yes, there are times when we will not necessarily make a payment if we fail to meet a standard because of circumstances outside our reasonable control for example severe weather conditions, strikes or actions of third parties. If you would like further information on these exceptions please call our Services Helpline.

If you owe us money and the debt has been outstanding for more than six weeks at the time when a payment is due to you under Our Customer Promise scheme, any payment will normally be credited to your account. We will notify you in writing that we have done this.

Your legal rights to take action for any loss or damage suffered are not affected by payments under Our Customer Promise scheme.

Payments do not constitute an admission of liability on our part. Any dispute regarding your right to a payment may be referred to the Water Services Regulatory Authority (Ofwat) for a binding decision.

How can I contact Ofwat?

Ofwat protects the interests of customers of all water and sewerage companies in accordance with legislative provisions and their Government licences. They can be contacted at:

Address

Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat)

Head Office, Centre City Tower, 7HillStreet,
Birmingham B5 4UA

Telephone:

0121 644 7500

Fax no:

0121 644 7559

Email: mailbox@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk

Under the Water Industry Act 1991, certain disputes can be referred to Ofwat or an independent arbitrator for a decision. Further details can be found in our *Complaints and Compliments* leaflet. Where we cannot reach an agreement with you in such cases, we will tell you of your right to refer the matter to another body.

If you are not satisfied

Please let us know. If you have a complaint about your water or sewerage service, you can let us know by telephoning our Services Helpline, or alternatively you can write to us or email a complaint to us by visiting our website.

In the unlikely event that we are not able to resolve a complaint to your full satisfaction and our position has been reviewed by a senior South West Water manager, you can refer your concerns to the Consumer Council for Water Western Region (CCWater) who will investigate independently.

CCWater is an independent statutory body which protects customer interests and investigates customer complaints.

They can be contacted at:

Telephone: 0300 034 2222

Hard-of-hearing customers please dial 18001 before the phone number

In writing: 1st floor

Victoria Square House,

Victoria Square,

Birmingham,

B2 4AJ

Email: form on website, ccwater.org.uk

Water Industry Redress Scheme (WATRS)

If your complaint remains unresolved after it has gone through all the stages of our complaints procedure and has been reviewed by CCWater, you may be eligible to take your concerns to WATRS, the Water Industry Redress Scheme, which can provide an independent binding decision.

Details on how and when to apply can be found at watsr.org or contact:

Telephone: 020 7520 3801

Email: info@watsr.org

Postal address: WATRS

International Dispute Resolution

Centre

70 Fleet Street

London

EC4Y 1EU

Contact us

Accounts helpline: 0344 346 1010*
8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat
Closed on Sundays and bank holidays

Services helpline: 0344 346 2020*
8am-6pm Mon-Fri
Emergencies only outside these times

There's lots of information and we can be contacted on our website
southwestwater.co.uk

Email: customercontact@southwestwater.co.uk

Debt helpline: 0800 083 0283
Water conservation: 0800 378937
Minicom: 0800 169 9965
For hard-of-hearing customers please dial 18001 before the helpline numbers.

Address
South West Water,
PO Box 4762,
Worthing, BN11 9NT

*03 numbers are charged at standard rates and will be included in any free minutes in a mobile or landline phone contract.

We have codes of practice on:

- Payment and Debt Recovery
- Priority Services
- Charges, Bills and Water Meters
- Complaints and Compliments
- Our Customer Promise
- Leakage for Domestic Customers
- Our Water Supply Service
- Our Waste Water Service
- Payment and Debt Recovery
- Priority Services.

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