

The Water Services Regulation Authority (**Ofwat**) is a non-ministerial government department. It is responsible for making sure that the water industry in England and Wales provides customers with a good quality and efficient service at a fair price.

## What to do if you have problems with your water company

# Water woes

**Ofwat**  
Centre City Tower  
7 Hill Street  
Birmingham  
B5 4UA

**Phone:** 0121 625 1300  
**Fax:** 0121 625 1400  
**Website:** [www.ofwat.gov.uk](http://www.ofwat.gov.uk)  
**e-mail:** [enquiries@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk)

Printed on 75% minimum de-inked  
post-consumer waste paper  
Reprinted December 2006

© Crown Copyright 2006



[www.ofwat.gov.uk](http://www.ofwat.gov.uk)



Here at Ofwat, we know that, from time to time, household customers will have concerns about the service they receive from their water and sewerage company. We have produced this leaflet to make sure you get the help you need to settle any complaint you have quickly and efficiently.

## Who are we?

We (Ofwat) are responsible for making sure that the appointed water and sewerage companies in England and Wales provide their customers with a good-quality, efficient service at a fair price.

We protect customers' interests and are the independent economic regulator of the industry. We aim to provide a high-quality and effective service.

## What are the issues that concern you?

We understand that any problem you have with your water and sewerage service is a serious issue.

The most common complaints we receive from customers are about:

- increases in water bills;
- disputed meter readings;
- queries about how unmetered bills are set and their levels;
- restrictions on water use (for example, through hosepipe bans);

- companies failing to repair leaking mains or pipes;
- damage caused to homes and gardens by sewage;
- companies failing to register customers' details correctly or send out correct account information;
- problems with new water supplies or connections; and
- companies failing to provide satisfactory responses to questions or complaints.

## Where do you go if you have a complaint?

If you have a complaint about the service you have received, you should contact your local company. This gives the company the chance to put things right. There is a list of company contact details at the end of this leaflet.

Your company should deal with you using their complaints procedure, which will have a series of stages. If you are still not satisfied with the response you receive after going through their complaints procedure, you can ask the

Consumer Council for Water (CCWater) to investigate your complaint, free of charge.

CCWater is the independent organisation that represents customers' interests. Its committees in England and Wales monitor the services that appointed water and sewerage companies provide. It has a legal duty to investigate most of the complaints you may have about your company's water and sewerage services. CCWater can also look at complaints from customers who receive their water supply from a water supply licensee (a company that supplies customers 50 million litres of water or more a year).

CCWater's leaflet, 'Water and sewerage services: How we can help if you have a complaint' sets out how it deals with complaints. You can find more information about CCWater on its website at [www.ccwater.org.uk](http://www.ccwater.org.uk).

## What standards of service can you expect from your water company?

The Government sets guaranteed standards of service that you are entitled to receive from your company.

The guaranteed standards scheme (GSS) sets out the standards and the levels of GSS payment companies can make. We monitor the GSS and recommend changes, for example to the levels of payment companies make. Companies make GSS payments when their level of service drops below certain standards for:

- making and keeping appointments;
- dealing with account enquiries or payment arrangements;
- dealing with written complaints;
- giving notice of planned interruptions to supply;
- restoring water supplies following planned interruptions;

- dealing with unplanned interruptions;
- dealing with low water pressure;
- dealing with sewer flooding; and
- failing to make GSS payments.

GSS payments are made automatically if you have had poor service. They are not compensation for any distress or loss you have suffered as a result. We can settle disputes about whether a GSS payment should be made.

There is more information about the GSS in our yearly 'Levels of service in the water industry in England and Wales' report, which is available from our library and on our website at [www.ofwat.gov.uk](http://www.ofwat.gov.uk).

As well as the GSS, many companies also have voluntary enhanced schemes or charters that recognise additional service failures. For example, some companies may make higher payments for poor service than those set out in the GSS. These enhanced schemes set out the circumstances when you will be entitled to a payment

that is different to, or not covered by, the GSS. There is more information in the CCWater 'Good practice register', which is available on its website.

All companies have a complaints procedure, which we have approved. You can get a free copy from your company.

## What complaints do we deal with?

There are some types of complaint that we deal with for household and non-household customers. The following list gives examples of the complaints we can deal with.

### Water meters: charges

If you have asked your company to fit a water meter and it has refused to do this free of charge, we can decide whether the company should fit it. If it is not practical or too expensive to fit a meter, we will ask the company to offer you an assessed charge, which will broadly reflect what you would have paid if you had a meter.

## Connecting a water supply

If there is a dispute about the reasonable costs of connecting a water supply to a company main, we can decide those costs.

## Providing a water main or sewer

We can also decide disputes about a company's charge for providing a water main or sewer, or an unreasonable delay in providing it.

## Discharge of effluent

We can decide disputes about consents companies have given to traders for the discharge of effluent into public sewers, or if the company refuses to give a consent.

## Sewer adoption

If a company refuses to adopt (accept responsibility for) a sewer, the owner of the sewer can appeal to us to decide whether the company should adopt it.

## Pipe laying

We can investigate complaints about laying pipes in private land. Where we think it appropriate, we can make an award of up to £5,000 compensation against the company.

Where there is a dispute about compensation following the company's works in a street and the parties cannot agree on an arbitrator we can appoint one.

## Meeting legal duties or licence conditions

We can also make decisions in cases where you believe that a company is not meeting its legal duties or licence conditions.

## Water supply licensing (WSL)

Since 1 December 2005, non-household customers who are likely to use at least 50 million litres of water a year at a set of premises have been able to benefit from new

opportunities in the water industry. We have powers to consider enquiries and make determinations about some aspects of the WSL regime.

## Other complaints

Other complaints that we deal with are alleged breaches of the Competition Act 1998 or European competition law by companies in the water and sewerage sector. These complaints generally involve supplies to non-household customers and may claim that a company has, for example:

- imposed predatory or excessively high prices for its services;
- refused to allow potential competitors access to its supply network without explaining why;
- set unfavourable terms and conditions to prevent competition;
- charged high prices, allowed unjustified delays or set its customers unreasonable terms when laying water mains; or
- colluded on pricing or bidding for contracts.

## What complaints can't we or CCWater handle?

Matters involving the Drinking Water Inspectorate

The Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) is the organisation that checks that the appointed water and sewerage companies in England and Wales supply water that is safe to drink and meets quality standards.

You can contact the DWI at:

**Drinking Water Inspectorate  
Room M03  
55 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2EY**

**Phone: 020 7082 8024  
Fax: 020 7082 8028**

**Website: [www.dwi.gov.uk](http://www.dwi.gov.uk)  
e-mail: [dwi.enquiries@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:dwi.enquiries@defra.gsi.gov.uk)**

## Matters involving the Environment Agency

The Environment Agency is the leading public body for protecting and improving the environment in England and Wales. Its duties cover:

- river and coastal water pollution;
- fisheries;
- recreation;
- navigation;
- water resource management; and
- river management.

You can contact the Environment Agency at:

**Environment Agency  
Rio House  
Waterside Drive  
Aztec West  
Almondsbury  
Bristol  
BS32 4UD**

**Customer enquiries:  
08708 506506  
Floodline: 0845 988 1188  
Incident hotline:  
0800 807060**

**Website:  
[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)  
e-mail:  
[enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk)**

## Non-regulated business

There are some activities of the appointed water and sewerage companies that we do not regulate. These are known as non-regulated businesses and include:

- plumbing services;
- waste management;
- engineering and consulting services;
- leasing vehicles;
- media interests;
- insurance services (for example, for domestic pipework and water appliances);
- fish farming; and
- all overseas activities.

Issues between an individual and a company which can be dealt with through the courts

These include questions of law and assessing damages. In certain cases, the law allows a customer to make a claim for loss or damage through the courts.

## Contacting us

**Ofwat  
Centre City Tower  
7 Hill Street  
Birmingham  
B5 4UA**

**Phone: 0121 625 1300  
Fax: 0121 625 1400**

**Library & Information  
Services  
Phone: 0121 625 1373  
Textphone: 0121 625 1422**

**Website:  
[www.ofwat.gov.uk](http://www.ofwat.gov.uk)  
e-mail:  
[enquiries@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk)**

## Contacting the Consumer Council for Water

**Consumer Council for Water  
Victoria Square House  
Victoria Square  
Birmingham  
B2 4AJ**

**Phone: 0121 345 1000 or  
0845 039 2837 (this will  
redirect you to your local  
CCWater committee)  
Fax: 0121 345 1001**

**Website:  
www.ccwater.org.uk  
e-mail:  
enquiries@ccwater.org.uk**

## Contacting your water company

**Anglian Water**  
Customer Services  
PO Box 770  
Lincoln  
LN5 7WX

For billing queries, phone:  
08457 919 155 (8.00 am to 8.00 pm,  
Monday to Friday, and 9.00 am to  
1.00 pm on Saturdays)

For water and sewerage service  
queries, phone: 08457 145 145  
(24 hours a day)  
Website: [www.anglianwater.co.uk](http://www.anglianwater.co.uk)

**Dŵr Cymru Cyfyngedig**  
(Welsh Water)  
Customer Relations Manager  
Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water  
PO Box 8  
Nelson  
CF46 6YG

For billing and account queries,  
phone: 0800 052 0145 (8.00 am to  
8.00 pm, Monday to Friday, and 8.30  
am to 12.00 noon on Saturdays)

Welsh language line: 0800 052 6058  
(8.00 am to 8.00 pm, Monday to  
Friday, and 8.30 am to 1.30 pm on  
Saturdays)  
Website: [www.dwrcymru.co.uk](http://www.dwrcymru.co.uk)

**Northumbrian Water**  
For billing queries:  
Customer Accounts Centre  
PO Box 200  
Durham  
DH1 9WQ

For all other queries:  
Abbey Road  
Pity Me  
Durham  
DH1 5FJ

For billing queries, phone:  
0845 733 5566 (8.00 am to 8.00 pm,  
Monday to Friday, and 8.00 am to  
1.00 pm on Saturdays)

For water and sewerage service  
queries, phone: 0845 717 1100  
(24 hours a day)  
Website: [www.nwl.co.uk](http://www.nwl.co.uk)

**Severn Trent Water**  
Customer Relations  
Sherbourne House  
St Martin's Road  
Finham  
Coventry  
CV3 6SD

For billing queries, phone:  
08457 500 500 (8.00 am to 8.00 pm,  
Monday to Friday, and 8.00 am to  
1.00 pm on Saturdays)

For water and sewerage service  
queries, phone: 0800 783 4444  
(24 hours a day)  
Website: [www.stwater.co.uk](http://www.stwater.co.uk)

**South West Water**  
PO Box 4  
Exeter  
EX2 7HS

For billing queries, phone:  
0800 169 1133

For other customer services, phone:  
0800 169 1144 (24 hours a day)  
Website: [www.swwater.co.uk](http://www.swwater.co.uk)

**Southern Water**  
Customer Service Centre  
PO Box 41  
Worthing  
BN13 3NZ

For billing and account queries  
(metered customers), phone:  
0845 273 0845 (8.00 am to 6.00 pm,  
Monday to Friday, and 8.00 am to  
1.00 pm on Saturdays)

For billing and account queries  
(unmetered customers), phone:  
0845 272 0845 (8.00 am to 6.00 pm,  
Monday to Friday, and 8.00 am to  
1.00 pm on Saturdays)

For other enquiries, phone:  
0845 278 0845 (24 hours for  
emergencies)  
Website: [www.southernwater.co.uk](http://www.southernwater.co.uk)

**Thames Water**  
PO Box 286  
Swindon  
SN38 1TU

For billing and account queries,  
phone: 0845 9200 888 (24 hours  
a day)

For water supply and wastewater  
services queries, phone:  
0845 9200 800 (24 hours a day)  
Website: [www.thames-water.com](http://www.thames-water.com)

### United Utilities

For billing queries  
(metered customers):  
PO Box 50  
Warrington  
WA55 1AQ

Phone: 0845 746 2222

For billing queries  
(unmetered customers):  
PO Box 459  
Warrington  
WA55 1WB

Phone: 0845 746 1100

For water service and wastewater  
queries:  
PO Box 453  
Warrington  
WA55 1SE

Phone (water service):  
0845 746 2200

Phone (wastewater service):  
0845 602 0406

Website: [www.unitedutilities.com](http://www.unitedutilities.com)

### Wessex Water

For billing queries and customer  
services:  
1 Clevedon Walk  
Nailsea  
Bristol  
BS48 1WW

Phone: 0845 600 3600 (8.00 am to  
6.00 pm, Monday to Friday)

For water and sewerage service  
queries and emergencies:  
Claverton Down Road  
Bath  
BA2 7WW

Phone: 0845 600 4600 (8.00 am to  
6.00 pm, Monday to Friday, and 24  
hours for emergencies)

Website: [www.wessexwater.co.uk](http://www.wessexwater.co.uk)

### Yorkshire Water

PO Box 52  
Bradford  
BD3 7YD

For billing queries (metered  
customers), phone: 0845 124 2425  
(8.00 am to 8.00 pm, Monday to  
Friday, and 9.00 am to 5.00 pm on  
Saturdays)

For billing queries (unmetered  
customers), phone: 0845 124 2420  
(8.00 am to 8.00 pm, Monday to  
Friday, and 9.00 am to 5.00 pm on  
Saturdays)

For customer services and water  
supply queries, phone:  
0845 124 2424

For wastewater queries, phone:  
0845 124 2429  
Automated service, phone: 0845 124  
2424 (24 hours a day)  
Website: [www.yorkshirewater.com](http://www.yorkshirewater.com)

Bournemouth & West  
Hampshire Water  
Customer Contact Centre  
George Jessel House  
Francis Avenue  
Bournemouth  
Dorset  
BH11 8NB

Phone: 01202 590059  
(24 hours a day)

Website: [www.bwhwater.co.uk](http://www.bwhwater.co.uk)

### Bristol Water

Customer Services  
PO Box 218  
Bridgwater Road  
Bristol  
BS99 7AU

For billing queries, phone:  
0845 600 3600 (8.00 am to 6.00 pm,  
Monday to Friday; emergency service  
6.00 pm to 8.00 am seven days a  
week)

For water supply queries, phone:  
0845 702 3797 (8.00 am to 6.00 pm,  
Monday to Friday)  
Website: [www.bristolwater.co.uk](http://www.bristolwater.co.uk)

### Cambridge Water

Customer Services  
90 Fulbourn Road  
Cambridge  
CB1 9JN

Phone: 01223 706050

Website: [www.cambridge-water.co.uk](http://www.cambridge-water.co.uk)

### Cholderton & District Water

Cholderton  
Salisbury  
Wiltshire  
SP4 0DR

Phone: 01980 629203

Dee Valley Water  
Packsaddle  
Wrexham Road  
Rhostyllen  
Wrexham  
LL14 4EH

For billing queries, phone  
01978 833200

For general enquiries and  
emergencies, phone: 01978 846946  
Website: [www.deevalleygroup.com](http://www.deevalleygroup.com)

### Essex & Suffolk Water

(part of Northumbrian Water)  
PO Box 600  
Durham  
DH1 9NW

For billing queries, phone:  
0845 782 0111 (8.00 am to 6.00 pm,  
Monday to Friday, and 8.00 am to  
1.00 pm on Saturdays)

For water queries, phone:  
0845 782 0999 (24 hours a day)  
Website: [www.eswater.co.uk](http://www.eswater.co.uk)

### Folkestone & Dover Water

Customer Services  
The Cherry Garden  
Cherry Garden Lane  
Folkestone  
Kent  
CT19 4QB

For billing, account and general  
queries, phone: 0845 888 5888  
(24 hours a day)

For emergencies, phone:  
0800 731 1933 (24 hours a day)  
Website: [www.fdws.co.uk](http://www.fdws.co.uk)

Hartlepool Water  
(part of Anglian Water)  
3 Lancaster Road  
Hartlepool  
Teesside  
TS24 8LW

For billing queries, phone:  
01429 858030  
(8.30 am to 5.00 pm Monday to  
Friday, excluding bank holidays)

For water supply queries, phone:  
01429 858050 or 0800 028 1024 (out  
of hours)  
Website: [www.anglianwater.co.uk](http://www.anglianwater.co.uk)

Mid Kent Water  
Customer Service Manager  
Snodland  
Kent  
ME6 5AH

For billing queries, phone:  
0845 850 6060

For supply problems, phone:  
0845 603 2603 (24 hours a day)

For other queries, phone:  
0845 223 5111  
Website: [www.midkentwater.co.uk](http://www.midkentwater.co.uk)

Portsmouth Water  
PO Box 8  
West Street  
Havant  
Hampshire  
PO9 1LG

For billing queries, phone:  
023 9249 9666

For water meter queries, phone:  
023 9244 9090

For supply problems, phone:  
023 9247 7999 (24 hours a day)  
Website: [www.portsmouthwater.co.uk](http://www.portsmouthwater.co.uk)

South East Water  
3 Church Road  
Haywards Heath  
West Sussex  
RH16 3NY

Phone: 0845 301 0845 (8.00 am to  
7.00 pm, Monday to Friday, and 8.00  
am to 1.00 pm on Saturdays)

For supply problems, phone:  
0845 602 1724 (24 hours a day)  
Website: [www.southeastwater.co.uk](http://www.southeastwater.co.uk)

South Staffordshire Water  
PO Box 63  
Walsall  
WS2 7PJ

For billing queries, phone:  
0845 607 0456

For supply problems, phone:  
0800 389 1011 (24 hours a day)  
Website: [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk)

Sutton & East Surrey Water  
London Road  
Redhill  
Surrey  
RH1 1LJ

For billing queries, phone:  
01737 764444

For supply problems, phone:  
01737 772000  
[www.waterplc.com](http://www.waterplc.com)

Tendring Hundred Water  
Customer Services Manager  
Mill Hill  
Manningtree  
Essex  
CO11 2AZ

For billing and water meter queries,  
phone: 01206 399333 (8.00 am to  
6.00 pm, Monday to Friday)

For supply problems, phone:  
01206 399200 (24 hours a day)  
Website: [www.thws.co.uk](http://www.thws.co.uk)

Three Valleys Water  
For billing queries:  
PO Box 188  
Bishops Rise  
Hatfield  
Herts  
AL10 9HL

For billing and water meter queries,  
phone: 0845 769 7982 (8.00 am to  
6.00 pm, Monday to Friday, and 8.00  
am to 2.00 pm on Saturdays)

For all other enquiries:  
PO Box 48  
Bishops Rise  
Hatfield  
Herts  
AL10 9HL

For supply queries, phone:  
0845 782 3333 (7.00 am to 8.00 pm,  
Monday to Friday, and 8.00 am to  
4.00 pm on Saturdays and Sundays)  
Website: [www.3valleys.co.uk](http://www.3valleys.co.uk)