

# Problems with your water and sewerage company

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

**Ofwat is the economic regulator of the water and sewerage and water only companies in England and Wales. Our job is to make sure that your water company provides you with a good quality service at a fair price.**

**Your water and sewerage services may be provided by two different companies. You may occasionally have a problem with the service you receive from your water and sewerage or water only company. This leaflet provides information for household and non-household customers about how to get your complaint settled quickly and efficiently.**

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## **I have a complaint about my water company. What should I do?**

If you have a complaint about the service you receive, you should first contact your water company to make it aware of your concerns. This gives it the chance to put things right. You can find your company's phone number on pages 14 and 15 of this leaflet.

Each water and sewerage and water only company in England and Wales must have a complaints procedure for dealing with customer complaints, whether you phone, write or email. It should use this in dealing with your complaint. We approve each company's complaints procedure. You can get a free copy of the complaints procedure from your company. It will also be available on the company's website. The company should tell you the name of the person dealing with your complaint, how they will deal with it and how long it will take.

If you are not satisfied with the response you receive to your complaint, you must tell the company. Someone who has not previously been involved with your complaint will review its response.

## What happens if I am not satisfied with my water company's response to my complaint?

If you are still not satisfied with the response you receive after going through the company's complaints procedure, you can ask the Consumer Council for Water (CCWater) for advice on what to do next. CCWater will tell you your rights as a consumer and whether it can pursue the matter further with the company.

CCWater is an independent organisation that represents consumers' interests. Any household or non-household customer of a water and sewerage or water only company can complain to CCWater. It has powers to investigate most of the complaints you may have about your company's services. You can find more information about CCWater on its website, [www.ccwater.org.uk](http://www.ccwater.org.uk).

You will need to tell CCWater why you are not happy with the company's response and what you want it to do to sort the matter out. If possible, you should send any information that will help CCWater to understand your complaint.

You can telephone CCWater on **0121 345 1000**. CCWater will tell you the name of the person who will consider your complaint and how to contact them.

You can also email CCWater at **[enquiries@ccwater.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ccwater.org.uk)**.

CCWater has its own complaints procedure if you have concerns about their handling of your complaint. We are not able to review how CCWater has handled your complaint.

If CCWater considers that we would be able to settle the matter as a dispute (see page 6) it may, with your permission, refer your complaint to us. Also, if CCWater decides that your complaint raises a wider issue that affects other customers, it may, with your permission, refer your complaint to us.



## What complaints and disputes does Ofwat deal with?

We only deal with certain complaints from individual customers. The water companies or CCWater handle most complaints.

We can also decide on certain disputes between a customer and their water company. Either the customer or the company can refer such disputes to us. Both sides must follow our decision.

We deal with complaints about:

- a water company's powers to lay and maintain pipes on private land; and
- anti-competitive behaviour under the Competition Act 1998, for example, colluding on pricing or bidding for contracts.

We also address concerns from customers that a water company is allegedly breaking its licence conditions or its main water supply or sewerage duties. But even in these

cases, you should still contact your water company first.

We can decide on the following disputes.

### Guaranteed standards scheme

- A customer's right to a payment or credit under the guaranteed standards scheme.

### Water connections

- The charges and conditions a company sets for making connections to water mains.
- The terms and conditions a company sets for a non-household supply.
- A requirement by the company for a customer to pay for their property to have a separate service pipe.
- The charges and conditions for providing a water main (requisition).
- The terms and conditions for the adoption of a self-laid main.
- The charges or disconnection costs that must be paid to a company before a business customer's supply is reconnected.
- A refusal to allow a customer to pay a metered charge because a meter is

not practical or is unreasonably expensive to install.

## Sewer connections

- A refusal to allow private sewers and drains to be connected to public sewers, or a requirement to inspect the drain or sewer before allowing a connection.
- The costs and security a company asks for when it connects premises to a sewer.
- The charges and conditions for providing a sewer (requisition).
- A proposal or refusal to adopt sewers or sewage-disposal works, or about the conditions in an adoption agreement.
- The position or suitability of a drain or sewer to replace an existing private drainage system which the company considers to be unsuitable.
- The effectiveness of an alternative sewer that has been provided to replace an existing one that is about to be closed.
- A requirement that a proposed drain or sewer is built so it can become part of a general sewerage system.

We also decide appeals from traders who are not happy with a refusal or the

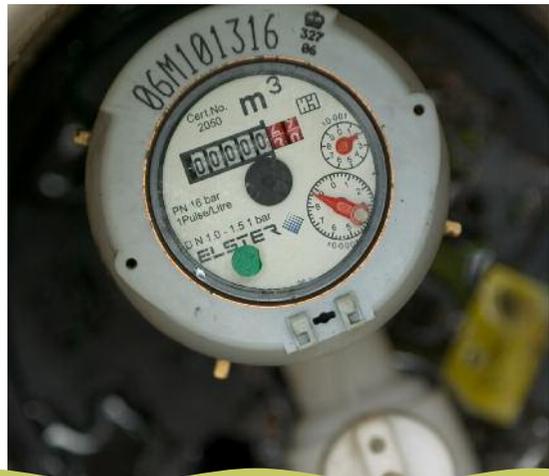
conditions that sewerage companies set for putting their trade effluent into the public sewer.

You can find copies of decisions ('determinations') we have made on the areas listed above on our website.

If you wish to make a complaint about any of these areas, please contact our Case Management Office. You can email us at [casemanagementoffice@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:casemanagementoffice@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk).

Or you can write to us at the following address.

Ofwat  
Centre City Tower  
7 Hill Street  
Birmingham B5 4UA



## What happens if I am not happy with the way Ofwat has handled my complaint?

We report our performance in our annual report and accounts. You can get a copy from our website or by calling our office (details on page 14).

We aim to respond to enquiries within 10 working days. We aim to provide an initial response to complaints and disputes within 10 working days.

If you are unhappy with the service you received from us, we would like the chance to put the matter right. We have an internal review procedure.

You should first write to our Information Rights team.

Please explain:

- what happened;
- why you are not satisfied; and
- what you would like to be done to put the matter right.

The Information Rights team will investigate your concerns. If you are still unhappy after we have considered your complaint again under our review procedure, you have the right to ask your Member of Parliament to take the matter to the Parliamentary Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman's job is to investigate complaints from members of the public who consider they have suffered an injustice through poor administration by government departments and certain public organisations.

The Information Commissioner also looks at complaints about being refused access to official information.

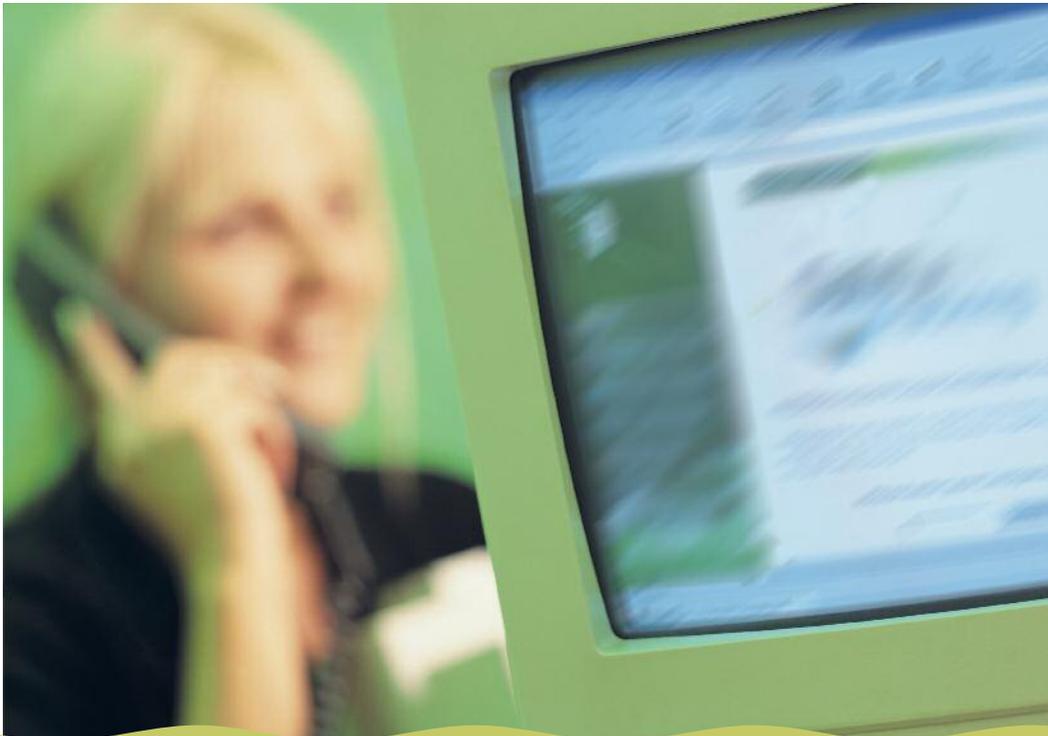
The Ombudsman's services are free. You can phone the Ombudsman's complaints helpline on **0345 015 4033**.

You can find more information about the Ombudsman on its website, **[www.ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.ombudsman.org.uk)**.

You can email the Ombudsman at **[phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk)**.

Or you can write to the Ombudsman at the following address.

Millbank Tower  
Millbank  
London SW1P 4QP



## Complaints not generally dealt with by either Ofwat or CCWater

In general, neither Ofwat nor CCWater deal with complaints about the following.

- Non-regulated businesses of the water companies such as plumbing services, waste management, engineering and consulting services, hotels, vehicle leasing, media interests, fish farming and all overseas activities.
- Issues between an individual and the company that can be dealt with through the courts. These include contractual disputes, questions of law and certain private law disputes where a person may be able to claim damages.





## Disputes that an arbitrator will decide

In some cases, an independent arbitrator can make a formal decision about a dispute. An arbitrator is appointed by agreement between the customer and the company. If they fail to agree on an arbitrator, we will appoint someone.

Disagreements about the following matters can be referred to an independent arbitrator.

- Costs of installing a meter and disagreements about where a meter should go if a water company asks a customer to pay for a meter to be installed.
- Compensation for street works and for sewerage works.

## Who else deals with complaints about water and sewerage issues?

Not all water and sewerage issues are dealt with by Ofwat or CCWater. Other regulators are responsible for regulating drinking water quality and protecting the environment, so you should contact them if your complaint concerns these matters.

If your complaint is about drinking water quality, you can phone the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) on **0300 068 6400**.

You can find more information about the DWI on its website, [www.dwi.gov.uk](http://www.dwi.gov.uk).

You can email the DWI at [dwi.enquiries@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:dwi.enquiries@defra.gsi.gov.uk).

Or you can write to the Drinking Water Inspectorate at the following address.

Area 4a  
Ergon House  
Horseferry Road  
London SW1P 2AL

If your complaint is about the environment, you can phone the Environment Agency on **03708 506 506**.

You can also phone the floodline on **0845 988 1188** or the incident hotline on **0800 807 060**.

You can find more information about the Environment Agency on its website, **[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)**.

You can email the Environment Agency at **[enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk)**.

Or you can write to the Environment Agency at the following address.

Rio House  
Waterside Drive  
Aztec West  
Almondsbury  
Bristol BS32 4UD



## Where to go if you want more information

To find out more, visit our website at:  
[www.ofwat.gov.uk](http://www.ofwat.gov.uk).

You can email us at  
[mailbox@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:mailbox@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk).

Or you can phone us on  
**0121 644 7500**.

You can find your company's contact details on your bill. Your water and sewerage services may be provided by two different companies.

Our website lists contact details for the water and sewerage companies.

## Phone numbers for water and sewerage companies

### Anglian Water

08457 919 155

### Dŵr Cymru

01443 452 300

### Northumbrian Water

08706 084 820

### Severn Trent Water

08457 500 500

### Southern Water

0845 272 0845

### South West Water

Accounts: 0844 346 1010

24-hour services: 0844 346 2020

### Thames Water

Operations: 0845 9200 800

Billing: 0845 9200 888

### United Utilities

Metered: 0845 746 2222

Unmetered: 0845 746 1100

Business: 0845 746 2255

### Wessex Water

0845 600 3600

### Yorkshire Water

0845 124 2424

## Phone numbers for water only companies

### 1. Bristol Water

0845 600 3600

### 2. Cambridge Water

01223 706 050

### 3. Cholderton & District Water

01980 629 203

### 4. Dee Valley Water

01978 833 200

### 5. Essex & Suffolk Water

01245 491 234

### 6. Hartlepool Water

01429 858 050

### 7. Portsmouth Water

023 9249 9888

### 8. Semcorp Bournemouth Water

01202 590 059

### 9. South East Water

0333 000 0002

### 10. South Staffs Water

01922 638 282

### 11. Sutton & East Surrey Water

01737 772 000

### 12. Affinity Water Central

Unmetered: 0845 769 7982

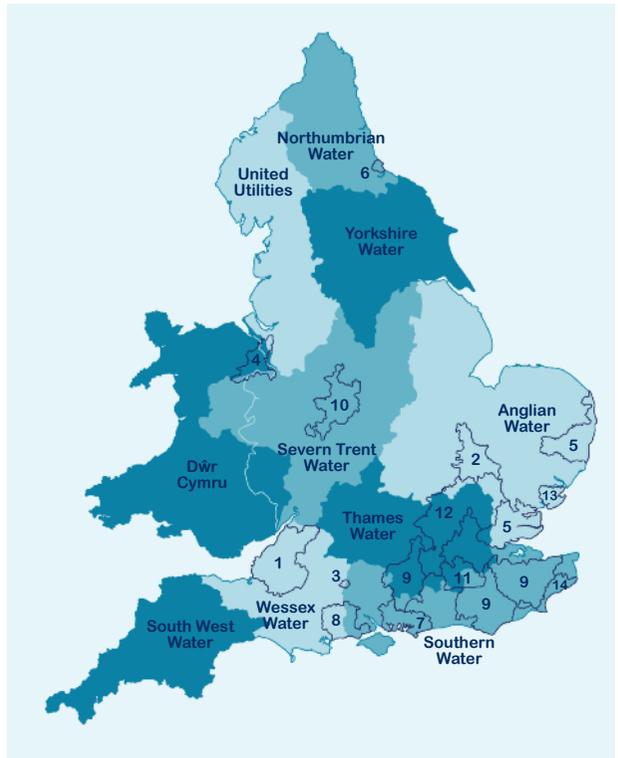
Metered: 0845 769 7985

### 13. Affinity Water East

0845 148 9288

### 14. Affinity Water Southeast

0845 888 5888



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



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

**Phone: 0121 644 7500**

**Fax: 0121 644 7699**

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

**Email: [mailbox@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:mailbox@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk)**

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