

Centre City Tower, 7 Hill Street, Birmingham B5 4UA  
21 Bloomsbury Street, London WC1B 3HF

By email

10 June 2016

Environmental Information Regulations- Request For Information

Reference: EIR 67052016

Dear 

Thank you for your email in which you request information concerning copies of correspondence between Ofwat and South East Water regards their application of codes of practice and conduct.

The information you have requested is attached.

If you have any queries or concerns with regard to the content of this email please do contact me, quoting the reference number.

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint or request a review of the decision, please contact:

Programme and Project Management Office  
Ofwat  
Centre City Tower  
7 Hill Street  
Birmingham B5 4UA  
[mailbox@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:mailbox@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk)

If you are not happy with the outcome of that review you can ask the Information Commissioner's Office to consider your complaint. Generally, the ICO will not make

Freedom of Information/EIR Provide the Information

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21 Bloomsbury Street, London WC1B 3HF

a decision unless you have exhausted Ofwat's complaints procedure. The ICO can be contacted at:

<https://ico.org.uk/>

or

The Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow

Yours sincerely,

Christine Manise  
Senior Associate, Freedom of Information  
Programme and Project Management  
Ofwat  
Centre City Tower  
7 Hill Street  
Birmingham B5 4UA

Encs.

Many thanks for the response [REDACTED]

We are happy for the reply to be provided to customers or others who ask to see it.

Best regards.

[REDACTED]

---

[REDACTED]  
Customer Services Director  
South East Water  
Rocfort Road, Snodland, Kent, ME6 5AH

[REDACTED]  
 Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 26 May 2016 13:33  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** Ofwat Finance and Governance <[FinanceAndGovernance@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:FinanceAndGovernance@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk)> [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Letter - provision of services to disabled, chronically sick or elderly customers

\*\*\*\*\* External Mail \*\*\*\*\*

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[REDACTED]

I just wanted to confirm with you that having read through the letter and associated documents, we do not have any issues or further questions about your approach.

Do you have any objections to us sharing the letter and associated documents with customers or others who ask to see this (for example, under Freedom of Information)? There does not appear to be anything sensitive.

Thanks

[REDACTED]

Ofwat, Centre City Tower, 7, Hill Street, Birmingham B5 4UA  
[Ofwat.gov.uk](http://Ofwat.gov.uk)  
Follow us at [twitter.com/ofwat](https://twitter.com/ofwat)

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 26 April 2016 08:52  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Letter - provision of services to disabled, chronically sick or elderly customers

Thanks [REDACTED]. As discussed, I'll read through the materials and work out whether or not we need a follow-up call/meeting.

Thanks

[REDACTED]

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

[Ofwat.gov.uk](http://Ofwat.gov.uk)

Follow us at [twitter.com/ofwat](https://twitter.com/ofwat)

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** 25 April 2016 17:51

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Cc:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: Letter - provision of services to disabled, chronically sick or elderly customers

Dear [REDACTED]

Please find attached our response to your recent letter. As we discussed, I am very happy to discuss our approaches in more detail, either through visiting your team, or through a conference call.

Best regards.

[REDACTED]

Customer Services Director

South East Water

Rocfort Road, Snodland, Kent, ME6 5AH

[REDACTED]

 Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail

**From:** Finance Governance Pro <[FinanceAndGovernance@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:FinanceAndGovernance@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk)>

**Date:** 6 April 2016 at 06:19:57 GMT-7

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** Letter - provision of services to disabled, chronically sick or elderly customers

\*\*\*\*\* External Mail \*\*\*\*\*

[REDACTED]

Please find attached a letter asking for more information on your provision of services to disabled, chronically sick or elderly customers. I'm happy to discuss further and/or answer any questions as necessary (my details are below and included in the letter).

Thanks



Ofwat, Centre City Tower, 7, Hill Street, Birmingham B5 4UA  
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Follow us at [twitter.com/ofwat](https://twitter.com/ofwat)

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South East Water Limited  
Registered Office: Rocfort Road, Snodland, Kent, ME6 5AH, UK  
Place of Registration: England  
Registration Number: 2679874

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25 April 2016

Our ref: [REDACTED]

Your ref:



[REDACTED]  
Ofwat  
Centre City Tower,  
7 Hill Street,  
Birmingham  
B5 4UA

Telephone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

### Provision of services to disabled, chronically sick or elderly customers

Further to your recent letter to [REDACTED] and our own subsequent conversation, I have outlined below the information you requested.

South East Water offers a range of services for customers with additional needs, with the aim of ensuring that all customers are able to access our services.

Our Code of Practice leaflet "Service Plus: Our Service for Customers with Additional Needs" outlines these, and is attached for your information.

In our conversation, you clarified that the issue raised with yourselves related to our response to a customer following the installation of a water meter under our Customer Metering Programme (CMP), and I have sought to clarify in my response where specific support is provided through the programme.

### How do we promote this service and engage with customers and other stakeholders.

Our Code of practice has always been highlighted on the bills that we send to customers. In 2015, access to these services was further improved, through the establishment of our Customer Care Team, which is now also prominently promoted on all our bills. An example is attached for information.

In addition, all of our Code of Practice leaflets are available via our website at:

<http://www.southeastwater.co.uk/news-and-information/publications/customer-leaflets-and-codes-of-practice>

All customer facing staff are trained to be able to recognise that customers may need access to the services available through our Codes of Practice. We recognised however, that requests were infrequent and that a team established specifically to support vulnerable customers who be able to offer

- Attached: 1) Code of Practice leaflet "Service Plus: Our Service for Customers with Additional Needs"  
2) Bill Image  
3) Code of Practice leaflet "Water metering: A guide for household customers"

**Rocfort Road  
Snodland  
Kent  
ME6 5AH**

**CUSTOMER ENQUIRIES**  
0333 000 1122

**BUSINESS CALLERS**  
0333 000 2244

**WATER SUPPLY - 24hr EMERGENCIES**  
0333 000 0365

**WEB**  
[www.southeastwater.co.uk](http://www.southeastwater.co.uk)

**EMAIL**  
[www.southeastwater.co.uk/contact](http://www.southeastwater.co.uk/contact)

South East Water Ltd  
Registered in England No. 2679874

Registered Office:  
Rocfort Road, Snodland, Kent, ME6 5AH

South East Water is an Investor in People

a deeper level of service, and also foster closer working relations with the wide range of third-part support agencies.

Our field technicians, including those working on our customer metering programme, are made aware of the Customer Care Team's role, and will also refer customers through to them for support and advice. The care team also has field-based advisors, and will make customer visits to provide advice and support, where this is appropriate or requested.

Our Customer Care Team now takes a central leading role in working with groups such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, Local Authorities, Social Landlords and other local community forums to ensure there is awareness of the support we provide, and to provide access to additional services and support tariffs as seamlessly as possible.

Customers registered on our special assistance register have doubled over the past three years, from just under 7000 in 2013-14, to nearly 14,500 in 2015-16.

**How do you ensure metered bill payers are able to check their water usage as part of your metering programme?**

Our approach is always to minimise customer effort and this is particularly important for our Service Plus customers. These customers get access to special services such as free leakage investigation and repair and full leak allowances, providing reassurance that they do not need to personally monitor their meter.

We ensure that all customers' meters are actually read twice each year, so that they can be confident that they are being billed on their actual usage rather than an estimate.

In addition, all new meters including those fitted through our CMP programme, are fitted with smart technology with leak-flags, which enables us to identify if there is a leak on the supply. Our Service Plus customers are contacted when this occurs to arrange an appointment to investigate and resolve the problem.

For some customers this reassurance has not been enough and so we have re-sited meters or installed internal meters to enable the customers to read the meter more easily. In some cases, we have also read the meter monthly for a period for the customer, until their confidence in water usage has been established.

**How you make sure that your staff are trained to identify customers who may benefit and be aware of how to communicate sensitively and effectively with these customers.**

All customer facing staff receive customer care training, to help us to provide an excellent experience. An example of this is the training provided to all Operations staff last year through Mary Gober International, a leading customer service training company.



Our standard policy is to site our meters at the end of the customer's supply pipe on the highway boundary, and our surveyors have been trained how to apply this policy flexibly, so that customer disruption is minimised. Our Code of Practice leaflet on water metering is also attached.

Where field technicians are unable to resolve an issue, they can refer individual cases through to the Customer Care Team, who can look further into the circumstances, and often provide a tailored solution.

As we discussed, if it would be helpful to discuss our service provision to vulnerable customers in greater detail, I would welcome an opportunity to visit you and your team with colleagues, or perhaps to hold a voice conference where we can clarify our services and approaches in further detail.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

**Customer Service Director**

# Water metering: A guide for household customers



Our Code of Practice

This leaflet forms part of our Customer Code of Practice, which outlines the services we provide for household customers. It has been produced in compliance with our licence.

## Contents

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## Introduction

### **Water metering: A guide for household customers**

Many South East Water customers already pay for their water supply based on a water meter, and we have embarked on a major programme to install water meters for 90 per cent of our customers by 2020.

But you don't need to wait if you think you could save money now with a water meter.

This leaflet explains how water metering works and will help you to calculate whether you could save money by asking us to fit a meter free of charge at your home.

To apply for a water meter, fill out the form on our website at **[southeastwater.co.uk/meters](http://southeastwater.co.uk/meters)** or complete the application form and send it back to us at the address shown on the back of this leaflet.

## What is a water meter?

The meter is a mechanical device fitted on your water supply pipe to record how much water you use.



## How are the charges calculated?

Metered bills are issued twice a year based on the readings we take from the meter. Occasionally we may not be able to take a reading, so we will send an estimated bill based on your previous recorded consumption. The charges come in two parts:

- › **Standing charge**
- › **Charge based on the actual quantity of water used and recorded by the meter, or on an estimated read.**

You can pay in full when you receive your bill or in monthly instalments on a payment plan. Please refer to our website [southeastwater.co.uk/yourbill](http://southeastwater.co.uk/yourbill) for details of the current year's charges.

We measure water in cubic metres (1 cubic metre = 1,000 litres or 220 gallons), but just how far does a cubic metre go?

1 cubic metre =

**13 baths**

**4,000 cups of tea**

**25 showers**

**1 hour running a hosepipe**

**100 toilet flushes**







**20 washing machine loads**

## Will I save money on my bills?

Research shows that customers who change to a meter use less water than they did previously, but every household is different and only you will know how often you use your washing machine, how many baths you run and so on. We have an online calculator to help you estimate the water use in your home to see whether your metered charges would be lower than your current unmetered charges. Please visit [southeastwater.co.uk/meters](http://southeastwater.co.uk/meters)

## How much water will I use?

The following table gives you an idea of how much water you and your household might use in a year, depending on low, average or high use. These figures are based on the water usage of South East Water customers. We record your water usage in cubic metres (m<sup>3</sup>) which will appear on your bill.

Number of people in your household	Annual water use in cubic metres (m <sup>3</sup> )		
	Low	Average	High
	35	80	140
	75	125	190
	100	160	230
	120	185	260
	140	225	280
	175	245	305

m<sup>3</sup> = 1,000 litres

### What happens next?

Complete the application form online at [southeastwater.co.uk/meters](http://southeastwater.co.uk/meters), or complete the application form and send it back to us at the address shown on the back of this leaflet. We will then arrange to survey your property to check if a meter can be fitted. We will install a meter and start applying metered charges within three months of receiving your application. If we do not meet this timescale, we will adjust your account to ensure you are not financially worse off as a result of the delay.

### I need to use a lot of water, what can I do?

Water Industry Regulations provide protection to low income households that are metered and use a large amount of water as a result of family circumstances or certain medical conditions. The WaterSure tariff is operated by all water companies and further details are provided in our Customer Code of Practice leaflet **Household water charges, payment options and debt recovery**. A WaterSure application form can be downloaded from our website at [southeastwater.co.uk/watersure](http://southeastwater.co.uk/watersure) or you can contact us to discuss the tariff.

## **Where will a meter be fitted?**

The standard location for a meter is in the pavement outside your property. When reading external meters our staff should not normally need to enter your home, but may need access to your garden or grounds. If we are unable to install the meter there, we will look for an alternative location which will usually be inside the property, immediately after the internal stop tap, provided:

- › **The stop tap controls the water to the whole property**
- › **There is easy access to the pipe and you agree to continue to provide access to allow meter readings and checks to be carried out safely**
- › **There is sufficient space to install the meter away from electrical and other domestic apparatus**
- › **You allow an external touch-reader or radio read to be fitted in an accessible position for meter reading.**

You may choose to have a meter installed in a different location if you meet the additional cost of installation and the proposed alternative location also meets the criteria. In such cases, you must allow us access to the meter for reading and checking. When reading external meters our meter reader should not normally need to enter your home, but may need access to your garden or grounds.

## **What if a meter can't be installed?**

It may not be practical for us to fit a meter at your property. This may be because the pipework at your property is complex or because there isn't a suitable location. In these circumstances we will inform you that we have been unable to fit the meter and will offer you the option of paying an Assessed Charge instead. Assessed Charges are annual sums which reflect the estimated usage of water of the premises.

The standard Assessed Charge is based on the number of bedrooms in the property. Customers paying an Assessed Charge who live alone can apply for our Single Occupier Assessed Charge by sending us a copy of their current council tax bill.

Customers living in a single room with shared hot water and laundry facilities, such as sheltered accommodation and houses of multiple occupancy, can apply for our Single Room Assessed Charge.



## What can I do if I think the meter is inaccurate?

Water meters are very accurate and are manufactured and tested to a British Standard specification. If you think your meter is not recording accurately, please call us to discuss – high readings can be a sign that there is a leak, or a faulty appliance or fitting and we may be able to help with this.

We can carry out a simple test free of charge but if you would like to have the meter removed for independent testing, you will be asked to pay for the cost of this test, which is £70 plus VAT. We may prove a meter reading by producing a certificate of a person duly authorised by us to read the meter and certify the reading.

If the test shows the meter is recording outside prescribed limits of error, we will refund the cost of the test and amend the bills for the last two meter readings. More information about this is available in our annual **Household Charges Scheme** leaflet which can be downloaded from our website.

## Can I change back to unmetered charges?

South East Water has embarked on a major programme to install meters for 90 per cent of its customers by 2020. You can apply to have a meter installed earlier than the date scheduled by the programme but you will not be able to revert to unmetered charges if the programme has reached your area or we are scheduled to install your water meter during the following year.

The current programme of metering installations can be viewed on our website at [southeastwater.co.uk/meters](http://southeastwater.co.uk/meters)

## How to read your meter

We aim to read the water meter twice a year, so there should be no need for you to check it. However if you wish to read the meter yourself please make sure it is safe to do so and follow the below instructions.

Each meter has a serial number printed on the meter casing just above the meter dials. This serial number also appears on your bill to identify and confirm which meter has been used to calculate your charges.

The white digits on the black background represent cubic metres ( $m^3$ ), and these are the ones that we use for charging. A cubic metre is 1,000 litres. The white digits with a red background are hundreds and tens of litres and are used for information only.

If your meter has been fitted externally you will need to access the meter chamber, which is normally in the footpath outside your property.

Inside the chamber you may see a foam or plastic disc that protects the meter from frost. Take out the disc to take your reading. Check also that the serial number is the same as the one on your bill. Once you have read the meter, replace the foam disc back in the same position that you found it and replace the chamber lid.

**You should only check the meter yourself if it is safe to do so.**

The meter we will install looks like this:

**Water meter**



**Meter reading example**



In this example, the reading is **11 cubic metres** of water and you would be billed for this.

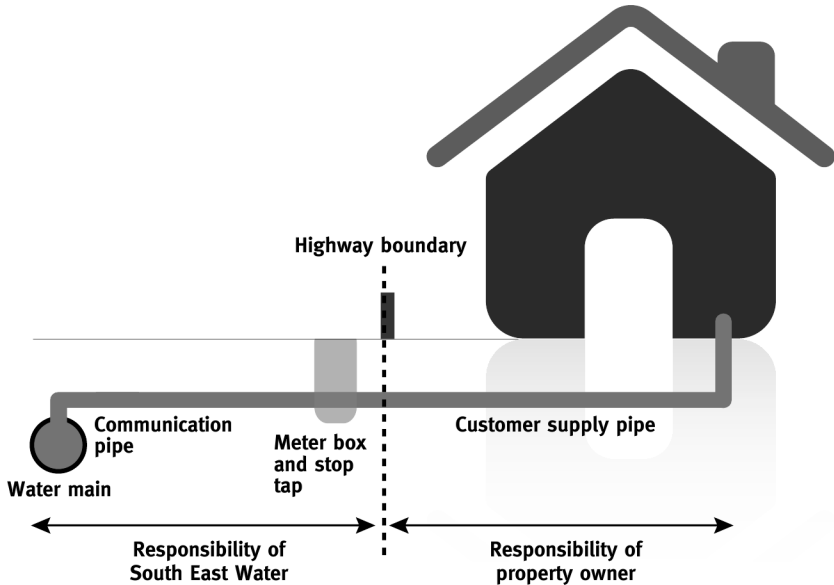
**Meter in position**





## Responsibility for pipes

You are responsible for the customer supply pipe which runs from the highway boundary into the house, as well as its repair and maintenance. If you have an internal meter fitted, the supply pipe remains your responsibility.



## Checking for leaks

If you have an external meter and wish to make sure there are no leaks on the pipework you can:

- › **Turn off your internal stop tap, which will usually be under the kitchen sink**
- › **Look at the numbers on the meter dial and watch to see whether they continue to move. Customers should only check the meter if it is safe to do so**
- › **If they do, it may mean there is a leak on your supply pipe. Contact us as soon as possible and we will investigate.**

Visit our website for more tips on how to check for leaks inside and outside your property. We have a Customer Code of Practice on **Leaks from customers' supply pipes**, which is available from our website or by calling us.

## **Meter maintenance**

We are responsible for the maintenance of the meter, so will need to check the meter from time to time. We will replace it free of charge if problems occur due to fair wear and tear.

You should not remove it yourself. This is because under the Water Act 1991 it is a criminal offence to carry out any works which require the disconnection of a meter, is likely to affect its operation, or prevent the meter from accurately showing the volume of water supplied.

Please contact us if you think your meter has been damaged.

## **Electrical earthing**

Some properties, if built before 1966 and not subsequently rewired, may find the water supply pipe is still used as a primary method of earthing. This has not been viewed as a safe method for over 40 years and in such cases it is recommended that you contact your electricity provider or competent electrician to have the electrical installation checked for safety.

Any electrical earthing issues that the property may have will be pre-existing and are not caused by the water meter installation. Therefore South East Water cannot be liable for any electrical earthing issues that may arise.

## **Save water and help the environment**

The south east of England is one of the driest regions in the country and increasing housing and population growth will make further demands on the amount of water available. It's important we use water wisely so there are sufficient supplies of this precious resource for everyone now and in the future.

It's very easy for us all to make a few simple changes in our daily lives which together will ensure we can have a secure supply of top quality drinking water.

Some of our top tips on saving water in the home and garden are listed overleaf, but more can be found on our website at [southeastwater.co.uk/savewater](http://southeastwater.co.uk/savewater)

## **How we can help you be more water efficient**

We want to help you to use less water, so we have a few great gadgets to help you do just that – available free. Once your water meter is installed we will send you information on a number of water efficiency devices you can order from us for free, including a toilet flush saver and shower timer.

For more tips on how to save water in the home and garden visit [southeastwater.co.uk/savewater](http://southeastwater.co.uk/savewater)



## Top 10 water efficiency tips

- › Take a short shower instead of a bath
- › Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth or use a glass of water to rinse. A family of four can save up to a bath full of water every day
- › Use a water butt and rain diverter to collect rainwater for use in the garden. A hosepipe can use up to 1,000 litres of water in an hour
- › Put the plug in to clean and peel your vegetables in a sink of water. A tap left running for 10 minutes uses nearly 100 litres of water
- › Only fill kettles with as much water as you need, it saves on your energy bills too
- › Use a flush saver in your toilet cistern, which can be ordered for free from South East Water, to save up to 1.2 litres of water with every flush
- › Lag your pipes to keep them warm which helps prevent them bursting in cold weather, flooding your home and wasting water. It also helps reduce heating bills
- › Water the garden in the late evening or early morning to reduce evaporation. This will also allow more time for the water to soak into the ground
- › Always run your washing machine and dishwasher with a full load. When buying a new machine, choose one that is water efficient
- › Repair dripping taps which can waste a lot of water – up to a litre every hour.

### What to do next

Simply complete the application form online at [southeastwater.co.uk/meters](http://southeastwater.co.uk/meters) and we will arrange to survey your property to check if a meter can be fitted. Alternatively complete the application form and send it back to us at the address shown on the back of this leaflet.

## For more information about South East Water

Please refer to our website [southeastwater.co.uk](http://southeastwater.co.uk) or the other Customer Code of Practice leaflets:

**Household water charges, payment options and debt recovery**

**Leaks from customers' supply pipes**

**Service Plus: Our services for customers with additional needs**

**Guaranteed Standards of Service**

**If things go wrong**

**South East Water: Your water company.**

The information we provide is intended to be accessible to all our customers. If you would prefer this leaflet in an alternative format, such as large print, braille or audio, please contact us. Additionally if your first language is not English we may be able to help you with our interpretation service when you call. Contact details are on the back of this leaflet.

## Customer Care

South East Water offers a wide range of tariffs, payment schemes and support to customers with additional needs or difficulty paying their bill.

For more information contact our specialist team on **0333 000 2468** or visit [southeastwater.co.uk/customer-care](http://southeastwater.co.uk/customer-care)



## How to Contact Us

Our Customer Service Centre is open:

Monday to Friday from 8am to 7pm

Saturday from 8am to 1pm

We are closed on Sundays and Bank Holidays



### Call

#### **Account enquiries**

0333 000 0001

#### **Water supply and general enquiries**

0333 000 0002

#### **Minicom/text phone**

0333 000 0004

#### **Payment helpline**

0333 000 0005

#### **24 hour water supply emergencies line**

0333 00 00 365

#### **24 hour automated payment line**

0333 00 00 247

#### **24 hour Leakline**

0333 000 3330



### Online

[southeastwater.co.uk/contact](https://southeastwater.co.uk/contact)



### Write

Customer Services

South East Water

Snodland

Kent

ME6 5AH



@SEWaterUK



SEWaterUK

# south east water

South East Water Limited, Registered in England No. 2679874  
Registered Office: Snodland, Kent, ME6 5AH