

Paying fair guidelines

Wessex Water and Bristol Water own a joint venture billing company (Pelican Business Services) that undertakes all billing, collection and debt management activities for both parent companies. We work closely together to harmonise billing policies and procedures.

We have completed a full extensive gap analysis of compliance by Pelican with the 143 paying fair principles to determine the extent to which we comply and identify areas in which we can improve.

In summary:

1. We fully comply with 140 of the 143 principles
2. Of those 140 there are 6 where although we fully comply, we feel we can still make further enhancements to what we do for the benefit of our customers. Most are linked to additional functionality available in our new billing system due to be implemented in late 2023
3. There are 2 where we have partial compliance but are making improvements to our procedures and systems to achieve full compliance
4. There is one principle (1.11) where we do depart from what is required in the guidelines and currently have no plans to change our approach.

Further information on items 2 and 3 including timescales is in the attached appendix.

With respect to principle 1.11, we do not believe the cost benefit case has been proven to increase meter reading frequency and/or send more frequent bills to all customers.

This was one of the recommendations of the affordability review, undertaken by CCW, but was subject to a pilot project by Southern Water. That project has not identified a compelling case that this approach delivers better outcomes for customers or changes payment behaviour over and above what can be achieved through other means of regular engagement and behavioural nudges. For one customer group it had a detrimental impact.

Both Wessex Water and Bristol Water do not use smart meters so meter reading is manual and any increase in frequency of this or the production of bills will add significant cost. We do adjust customers' payments arrangements for those who need and ask for it and we also offer additional free meter reads for our Priority Services customers.

We have also attached our updated core customer information on debt. There are two versions, one for customers in the mutual Wessex Water/Bristol Water area and one for customers in the Wessex Water supply area to reflect company branding. Both include the payment methods available to customers, guidance for those who are having difficulty paying their bills and a description of the procedures followed to collect outstanding debt from customers.

Both versions have been refreshed in terms of 'look and feel' and any additional information added where necessary.

We have shared them with CCW and received positive feedback. CCW had a few suggested additions to the text which we have made.

Further information can also be found on our websites using the following links:

[Paying your bill | Wessex Water](#)

[Difficulty paying your bill | Wessex Water](#)

[My Bill \(bristolwater.co.uk\)](http://bristolwater.co.uk)

[Struggling To Pay \(bristolwater.co.uk\)](http://bristolwater.co.uk)

Both Bristol Water and Wessex Water have also updated Ofwat and CCW on their response to the cost-of-living crisis.

We hope this is helpful. Do let us know if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

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