

# Our Customer Promise

## Our Customer Promise

In this leaflet we explain what we promise and what you should expect from us. Some aspects of our service are based on standards set by Government. We see these as minimum requirements and have improved on or introduced additional standards as part of our commitment to providing excellent service.

A list of other Codes of Practice can be found on the back of this leaflet. You can download them from our website, [southwestwater.co.uk/cop](https://southwestwater.co.uk/cop), or call us on 0344 346 1010 for 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 detailed below, we'll automatically pay you £20 within 10 working days, or credit £20 to your account if it's in arrears. If we don't make payment within 10 working days, we'll automatically pay you a further £20.

### 1. Keeping appointments

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

Where possible we'll set a time for an appointment and we won't be more than 30 minutes late.

We'll keep the appointment made but if we have to change it we'll give you at least 24 hours' notice.

### 2. Account queries

If you send us a written query about the accuracy of your water or wastewater account, we'll reply within 10 working days of receiving it.

### 3. Payment arrangements

If you notify us in writing that you wish to change your payment method, we'll let you know within five working days if for any reason it's not possible to action your request.

### 4. Complaints

If you complain in writing, we'll issue a reply within 10 working days of receiving your complaint.

### 5. Interruptions to your water supply

#### 5a. Planned interruptions

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

We'll also let you know in writing when you can expect your supply to be restored. If we fail to give you notice, we'll automatically pay you £20.

If we don't restore your supply by the time we said we would, we'll automatically pay you £30, plus an additional £30 for each further 12-hour period your supply remains unrestored.

We'll make payment within 20 working days of the supply interruption. If we don't make a payment which we should know is due to you, we'll automatically make an additional payment of £20.

Where we don't identify that you're affected and are therefore unable to make an automatic payment, you can claim your payment within three months of the date on which your supply is 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'll restore the supply within 12 hours of becoming aware of the interruption.

If we fail to restore your supply within these times, we'll automatically pay you £30, plus an additional £30 for each further 12-hour period your supply remains unrestored.

We'll make payment within 20 working days of the supply interruption. If we don't make a payment which we should know is due to you, we'll automatically make an additional payment of £20.

Where we don't identify that you're affected and are therefore unable to make an automatic payment, you can claim your payment within three months of the date on which your supply is interrupted.

#### 5c. Alternative water supplies

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

#### 5d. Repeated burst mains

If your water supply is interrupted three or more times in any 12-month period due to a burst main, you can claim a payment of £10 for the third and each subsequent supply interruption. A payment is not due where the burst main is 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'll provide a specialist clean up and drying service free of charge. We'll 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'll automatically make a payment equal to your annual sewerage charges for each incident of flooding from our sewer within 20 working days of the event.

If you're a metered customer, we'll calculate the payment based on your consumption for the previous year. The minimum payment we make for each flooding event from our sewer is £150 and the maximum payment is £1,000.

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

We'll make payment within 20 working days of the internal flooding. If we don't make a payment which we should know is due to you, we'll automatically make an additional payment of £20.

Where we don't identify that you're affected and are therefore unable to make an automatic payment, you can claim your payment within three months of the date on which the flooding occurs.

#### 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've been materially affected by the sewer flooding.

If we're notified that your property has been flooded, we'll visit and investigate. If the flooding appears to have come from our wastewater system, we'll 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.

You should complete and return your claim form to us within three months of the incident. If we agree that a payment is due, we'll make a payment equal to 50% of your annual sewerage charges for each incident.

The minimum payment is £75 and the maximum is £500. If you're a metered customer, we'll calculate the payment based on your consumption for the previous year. We'll make any payment due automatically within 20 working days of receiving your form; if we don't we'll automatically make an additional payment of £20.

7c. If either internal or external sewer flooding occurs as a result of exceptional weather conditions, we're 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'll make a payment under section 7a 'Internal flooding' only.

## 8. Replacement of lead service pipes

If you replace lead pipework for which you're responsible, we'll replace any lead service pipe for which we're 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 provided you give us the required notice, we'll replace our section of pipe within 10 working days of you completing your work or at the time your new connections are taking place, if you prefer.

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

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

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

In the unlikely event that the notice is in place for more than seven days, we'll make an additional payment of £15.

If we have to issue a 'Do not use' notice as a precautionary measure to safeguard your health as a result of problems with our supply, we'll make a £50 payment to you. In the unlikely event that the notice is in place for more than seven days, we'll make an additional payment of £15.

## 10. 'Boil water' notices

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

## 11. Discoloured water

If you have a water meter and need to run off discoloured water, we'll credit your account if you contact us at the time. Please call our Services Helpline to let us know.

Where claims are agreed in advance of committing to any expenditure, we'll generally compensate you for any damage caused by discoloured water, for example, stained washing, permanent staining of baths and hand basins or the cleaning of water tanks and heating systems.

When we pay compensation, the damaged goods will become the property of South West Water.

Where the water we supply is regularly heavily discoloured, we'll consider compensation according to the severity and duration of these events and will reduce your annual water service charge by 10% for each month affected up to a maximum of 50%.

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

## 12. Low pressure

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

Where we're aware that the pressure has fallen below this level for one hour or more on two separate occasions in any 28-day period, we'll automatically pay you £25. We'll make only one payment of £25 in any charging year. If we're unable to identify that you're affected, you can claim a payment within three months of the date of the second occasion.

## 13. Interruptions to your supply because of drought

If we ever need to introduce standpipes or rota cuts under a Drought Order, we'll make a payment of £35 to you 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'll always try to carry out work so that access to your individual property isn't blocked. Where this can't be avoided, we'll let you know our plans in advance. If we don't, you can claim £10 by calling our Services Helpline.

For further details, call our Services Helpline.

## 15. Money paid in error

If it's discovered that you've wrongly paid for a service which we haven't provided, we'll refund all of the money you've paid for a period of up to 10 years before the mistake is discovered. We'll also include interest if the period in question is longer than 12 months.

This doesn't 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 or financial loss incurred on proof of the claim.

## 17. Receipts

If you request a receipt for money you've paid to us for water and sewerage charges and we don't 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, we'll issue your bill within three months of the end of the period it covers (for example, we'll issue a bill for the period ending 28 June by no later than 28 September). If we don't and we send you a number of bills for different periods at the same time, we'll reduce the amount you have to pay. The maximum amount by which we may reduce charges is 50%.

## 19. Court claims

If we make an error or omission which causes us to wrongly issue a court claim against you for non-payment of charges, we'll pay you £100 and withdraw associated fees and costs.



## Do I need to claim for a payment?

You'll need to claim for some standards but we'll pay others automatically. Please refer to the information about the relevant standard of service above. If you believe you're entitled to a payment you haven't received, please call our Services Helpline or write to us.

## Are there any exceptions?

Yes, there are times when we won't 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'd like further information about 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 a payment is due to you under Our Customer Promise scheme, we'll normally credit the payment to your account. We'll let you know in writing that we've 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 wastewater companies in accordance with legislative provisions and their Government licences. You can contact Ofwat at:

Telephone: 0121 644 7500

Address: Case Management Office, OFWAT

Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat)

Head Office, Centre City Tower, 7 Hill Street

Birmingham B5 4UA

Fax: 0121 644 7559

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

Under the Water Industry Act 1991, certain disputes can be referred to Ofwat or an independent arbitrator for a decision. You can find further details in our [Complaints and Compliments](#) leaflet. Where we can't reach an agreement with you in such cases, we'll inform you of your right to refer the matter to another body.

### If you're not satisfied

Please let us know. If you have a complaint about your water or wastewater service, you can let us know by calling our Services Helpline, writing to us or emailing your complaint through our website.

In the unlikely event that we're not able to resolve your 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 (CCW) who'll investigate independently.

CCW is an independent statutory body which protects customers' interests and investigates complaints.

You can contact them at:

Telephone: 0300 034 2222

Relay UK (NGT) is also available

Address: 1st floor

Victoria Square House

Victoria Square

Birmingham

B2 4AJ

Email: via form on website

Website: [ccwater.org.uk](http://ccwater.org.uk)

### Water Industry Redress Scheme (WATRS)

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

You can find details on how and when to apply at [watrs.org](https://www.watrs.org) or contact:

Telephone: 020 7520 3801

Address: WATRS

International Dispute Resolution Centre

70 Fleet Street

London

EC4Y 1EU

Email: [info@watrs.org](mailto:info@watrs.org)

## Protecting your data

All the information we hold about you is treated in strict confidence and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. Access to information by employees will be on a 'need to know' basis. We will share information we hold on you with third parties and service providers in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018. The Privacy Policy on the South West Water website ([southwestwater.co.uk/privacy](https://southwestwater.co.uk/privacy)) explains what information we hold and process, who we share your information with and our lawful basis for doing so.

## 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  
[www.southwestwater.co.uk](http://www.southwestwater.co.uk)

Debt Helpline: 0800 083 0283  
Water conservation: 0800 378937  
Minicom: 0800 169 9965  
You can contact us via Relay UK (NGT)

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

We have Codes of Practice on:

- [Complaints and Compliments](#)
- [Our Customer Promise](#)
- [Leakage for Domestic Customers](#)
- [Our Water Supply Service](#)
- [Our Wastewater Service](#)
- [Payment and Debt Recovery](#)
- [Priority Services](#)

These codes of practice can be found on our website [www.southwestwater.co.uk](http://www.southwestwater.co.uk)

We work hard to support customers in vulnerable circumstances and are proud to have received certification against the British Standard for Inclusive Service Provision.

