



Here for you

Information and advice
for household customers



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1. General information

1.1 What this code is all about

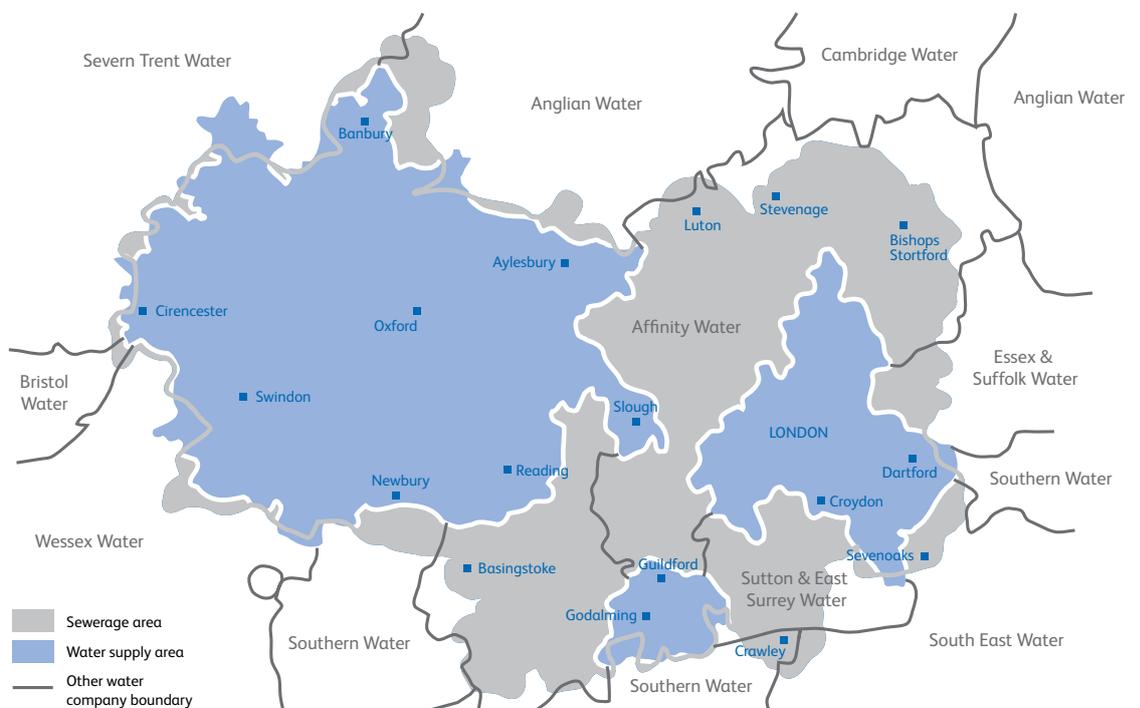
This code explains the services we offer to household customers. In it, you'll find information about our water and wastewater (sewerage) services, our charges and bills and how we can assist if you need extra help because of your circumstances or problems you're facing.

1.2 About us

We're proud to provide an essential service at the heart of daily life, health and enjoyment to millions of customers across London and the Thames Valley.

We're the UK's largest water and wastewater services company. Every day we supply approximately 2.6 billion litres of drinking water to nine million customers. We also remove and treat four billion litres of sewage every day for 14 million customers.

We work within a 13,000 square km (5,000 square miles) area, from parts of Gloucestershire in the west, to areas of Kent and Essex in the east. A number of other water supply companies also provide drinking water in this area but we are the only company responsible for wastewater services. The map below shows the areas we serve.



We put you, the customer, at the centre of everything we do. We listen to what you tell us and use your feedback to constantly improve our services.

We also work with various agencies and customer focus groups within the water industry, as mentioned below. We share best practice, ensure the charges we raise are fair for all our customers and that we exceed our regulatory minimum standards of service wherever we can.

1.3 How we are regulated

Ofwat (the water services regulation authority)

Ofwat is our economic regulator. They set prices and regulate our performance, helping us provide a good quality value for money service. Ofwat has approved this Code of Practice and ensures we meet the conditions of our licence. These conditions include:

- Approval of charges for our services
- Monitoring the levels of service we provide
- Guidance about what information we must give you

Consumer Council for Water (CCWater) London and South East

CCWater London and South East is your customer champion and can review any matter affecting your water and wastewater services. If you have a concern or complaint which we haven't been able to resolve with you, CCWater may investigate and take the matter up with us on your behalf. Normally, they'll only do so if we've been given the opportunity to put things right first. Its services are free.

Our complaints procedure tells you how we aim to resolve complaints. Information about this is in section 8 -If you're unhappy with our service.

Department of environment, food and rural affairs (Defra)

Defra sets national government policy for water and controls some very important areas of our work. For example, issues about the affordability of water, especially for low income households, and competition within the water industry.

Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI)

The DWI is part of Defra. It checks the drinking water we supply is safe and meets the water quality standards in England, which are based on European Union directives.

We test the quality of the water we supply and make the results available to the public. Our water quality is among the highest in the industry and in 2012, met 99.97% of stringent tests. We work hard to continually improve our water supply. We also make sure our water treatment process and distribution system are operated and maintained properly. See section 2 - Your water.

Environment Agency (EA)

The EA is responsible for matters relating to rivers, groundwater, flood defence, pollution control, fisheries and navigation. In addition, it regulates both the quality and the quantity of water we take from and return to rivers, other inland waters and underground sources.

Local health agencies

Local authority environmental health officers and the district health authorities monitor public health in the communities we serve. We keep them informed about water quality and odour issues in their areas and we work together to resolve any concerns.

1.4 How we measure our performance

Customer feedback

Our most important feedback is from you, our customer. Every day we receive feedback about a specific service we've given you. We use this feedback to make sure you're fully satisfied with what we've done and to improve the service we give to all our customers. We take seriously the daily customer satisfaction score, because your opinion matters.

Our performance

We constantly monitor our own performance, to ensure we are keeping our promises and delivering a service which we all can be proud of. For example:

- The speed and quality of our replies to you
- How quickly we answer your call
- How often we read your meter
- The quality of our water
- Reducing leakage from our mains and customers' own pipes
- Our treatment of sewage and wastewater from drains and sewers
- The number of properties at risk of sewer flooding
- Reducing pollution
- Renewable electricity generation
- Health and safety

There is more information about our performance in our annual report. You can download a copy of our latest report from our website at www.thameswater.co.uk/annualreport.

Water quality standards

These are reported against compliance with drinking water standards in England, which are based on European Union directives. You can find more information about this directive by visiting www.ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-drink. Details of how to obtain a water quality report for your area can be found in section 2.1 of this code.

Environmental performance report

Our annual corporate responsibility and sustainability report explains our work to protect both the environment and future water supplies, and includes how we are:

- Making sure we have enough water for today's needs and for future generations
- Encouraging everyone to use water wisely
- Reducing leakage

You can view this report at www.thameswater.co.uk/cr

Benchmarking ourselves against other companies

We measure our standards of service in many different ways. We do this by using benchmarks of service judged by other organisations and bodies, such as external awards and recognition across a variety of different fields, as well as using Ofwat's measures of service. These are important benchmarks for the industry and are published in their annual service and delivery report, which can be downloaded from www.ofwat.gov.uk.

Consumer Council for Water (CCWater) feedback

We use CCWater's research and direct customer feedback to constantly improve our services.

Equality Act 2010

External and on-going support from a number of specialist charities, for example the Royal National Institute of Blind People, support us in providing a comprehensive range of specially designed services for customers who need extra help. More information can be found in section 5 - Extra care services, or on our website at www.thameswater.co.uk/extracare.

Staff training

All our employees receive customer service training. Please let us know if you've been impressed, or disappointed, with the way you have been looked after. You can give us your feedback online by visiting www.thameswater.co.uk/contactus or by writing to us at: Thames Water, PO Box 286, Swindon, SN38 2RA.

2. Your water

We supply around 2.6 billion litres of water every day through 31,400km of water mains stretching from Gloucestershire across London and into Kent. About three-quarters of our water comes from rivers, with the rest from underground streams and natural underground reservoirs.

This section tells you about:

- The excellent quality of water we deliver to your tap
- Water pressure and flow
- Who is responsible for pipe work in and around your home
- Finding and fixing leaks
- When we have to interrupt your water supply
- Saving water
- Requesting new connections to our water mains.

You can also find more information at www.thameswater.co.uk/yourwater.

2.1 Drinking water quality

We pride ourselves on the quality of our drinking water. We carry out more than 500,000 tests every year by taking samples at our treatment works, from our water mains and pipes, as well as from customers' taps.

Since 2010, more than 99.97% of tests taken at our customers' taps have met the standards required by UK and European legislation and we work hard to continually improve the quality of your drinking water.

The Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2000 (as amended), controls the quality of domestic water supplies and is part of the responsibility of the secretary of state for the environment food and rural affairs. These regulations cover how the water should taste, look and smell, as well as the chemical content, treatment requirements and monitoring arrangements.

Your drinking water

You can get a free report on the water quality in your area by visiting www.thameswater.co.uk/waterqualitysearch and typing in your postcode, or you can call us on 0800 316 9800. We'll send your report within seven days.

You can also view our water quality records on request by calling us on the telephone number above and making an appointment. These records are held at our head office:

Thames Water
Clearwater Court
Vastern Road
Reading
RG1 8DB

Concerns about water quality

If you're concerned about the quality of your drinking water call us straight away on 0800 316 9800. We'll ask you a few simple questions to help identify the cause of the problem and decide what needs to be done.

Occasionally our scientists will need to investigate further, in which case we'll call you as soon as possible. This is usually within one working day to offer advice and tell you what we're doing. If your concern is about illness, our scientists will normally call you within one hour, to respond to your initial enquiry.

To resolve the problem we may need to inspect your plumbing system or take water samples for testing. If we need to do this we'll make a convenient appointment with you.

If we need to test your water we'll take a sample for laboratory analysis. If we find anything unusual, we'll telephone you as soon as the results are available and tell you what precautions you should take, such as boiling your water. We'll aim to send you a full written report within ten working days.

Where large numbers of properties are involved we may use media channels to keep everyone informed.

Restriction of use notice

Very rarely we may need to issue you with a restriction of use notice. This notice will advise you to either boil the water before use or not use your water at all. If we have to do this, we'll automatically pay you £30 under our customer guarantee scheme. See section 7 of this document or refer to our leaflet - Our guarantees to you, a copy of which can be found at www.thameswater.co.uk/ourcommitment.

Cloudy drinking water

Water supplies are affected by changes in the pressure of the water in our mains, due to burst pipes or essential maintenance work. This can occasionally disturb sediment in the pipes which, for a short time, may result in a brown discoloration to the water. Or air can be trapped in our mains, temporarily causing the water to look milky white. If the problem persists, please let us know. You can also find out more by visiting the frequently asked questions section on our website at www.thameswater.co.uk/waterqualitysearch.

Water quality advice – internal/private plumbing

If you're concerned about the quality of your hot water or water in your bathroom, your local council's environmental health officer will be able to give advice.

If you have further concerns or are dissatisfied

If you're unhappy with the response we give you, or if you have any further concerns about your water quality, you can contact either the Consumer Council for Water or the Drinking Water Inspectorate, who may investigate on your behalf. Further information can be found at www.ccwater.org.uk and www.dwi.gov.uk.

2.2 Water pressure

Water pressure and how it's measured

Water pressure is the force of water as it comes out of your tap when it's turned on fully. It's measured in 'bars' and in general, we aim to supply you with a minimum pressure of one bar (approximately ten metres head) in our communication pipe. This is the pipe which connects your water supply pipe with our water mains. See diagram in the next section Water Pipes.

One bar of pressure is the force required to raise water to a height of ten metres, which is slightly more than the height of a two-storey house. This is a reference level of service for water pressure and is used as a guide. However, the actual - or statutory - level of pressure for any particular property may be slightly different.

What affects water pressure?

Pressure can be affected by a number of things. For example, how far you live from the nearest reservoir, water tower or pump; the height of your property; if you have a leak on your water supply pipe; or how much water is being used by you or your neighbours - especially if you share a water supply pipe with them.

Even the way water moves around your home (water flow) and the different types of appliances you use can affect water pressure.

Water flow

The way water moves is known as water flow. We aim to supply you with a minimum flow of nine litres per minute.

You can only get a certain amount of water through a pipe at any one time. The width of your water supply pipe and the number of water appliances attached to it can affect the way water flows into and around your home.

Checking your water pressure and flow

As a guide, your first tap in your home, usually your cold kitchen tap, should be able to fill a 4.5 litre (1 gallon) bucket in 30 seconds with all the other taps and appliances turned off.

If you think your water pressure is too low, please call us on 0800 316 9800. If we're responsible for the problem we'll tell you what we intend to do. If it's out of our control we'll offer advice on what you can do to improve the situation.

Our customer guarantee scheme

If the water pressure in our communication pipe falls below seven metres head (approximately 70% of one bar) twice in a 28 day period, and lasts for at least one hour on each occasion, you may receive a customer guarantee scheme payment, usually as a credit to your water services account, subject to certain conditions. This guarantee doesn't apply if the low pressure is caused by work we're doing on our water mains, for example repairing bursts and leaks or because of drought.

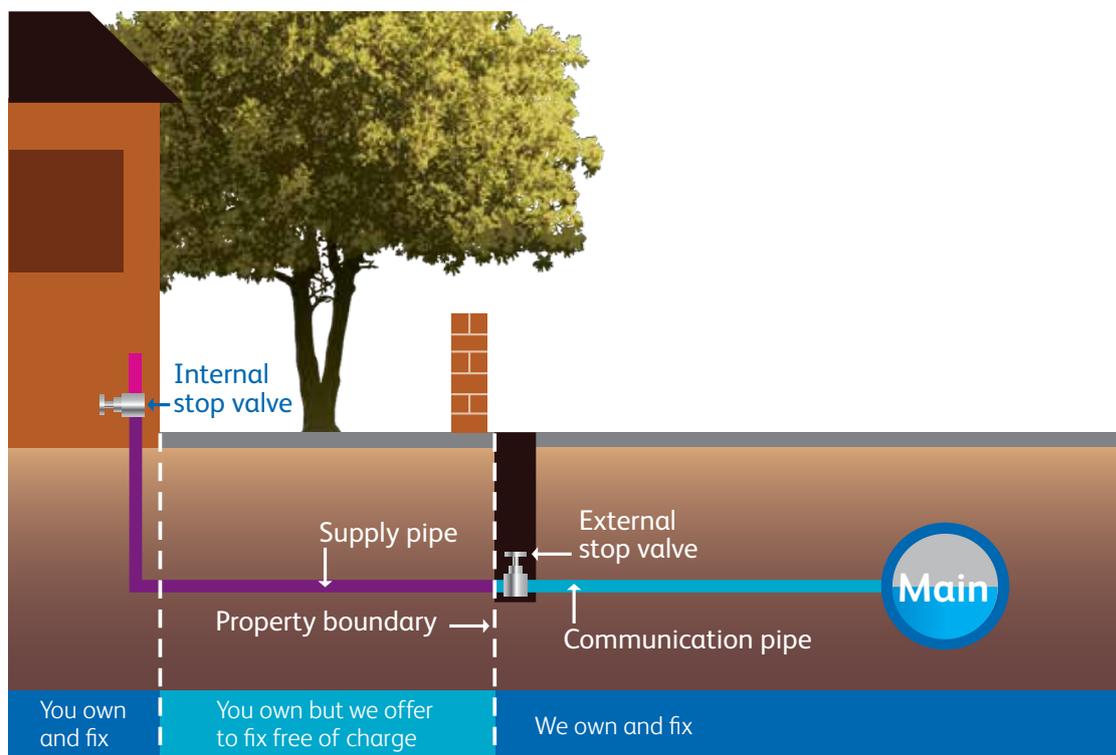
Only one payment will be made in any financial year (1 April to 31 March). For more information, see section 7 - Our guarantees to you, or refer to our leaflet, Our guarantees to you, a copy of which can be found at www.thameswater.co.uk/ourcommitment.

If it's possible for us to know you have had two periods of low pressure, we'll make the payment automatically. Otherwise, you can submit a claim for the payment within three months of the date of the second period of low pressure.

2.3 Water pipes

Responsibility for water pipes

The picture below shows how a typical house is connected to our water main in the street.



Our pipes

We're responsible for the communication pipe, which connects our water mains with your water supply pipe. This pipe usually runs from our water main in the road to the boundary of your property. There may be an outside stop valve and sometimes a meter which we also own.

We are responsible for keeping our meters and pipes in good repair. However, you may have to pay the reasonable costs of repair if you or your plumber should damage them.

Your pipes

The rest of the pipes, outside and inside your home, are yours or your landlord's responsibility. This includes your internal stop valve. This valve can usually be found under your kitchen sink. It can be used to turn off your water in an emergency or, for example, when fitting a new kitchen.

It's also your responsibility to maintain your water supply pipe, stopping leaks and replacing or mending it when it bursts. You still need to do this if your water supply pipe runs under other properties before reaching yours. If you share a water supply pipe with your neighbours, then you and your neighbours are jointly responsible for it.

Even though your water supply pipe is your responsibility, if it does leak we will help you get it replaced or fixed. See section 2.4 - Finding and fixing leaks, for more information.

Protecting your water pipes

All the pipes, taps and fittings in and around your home need care and attention, especially during cold weather.

- Cover water pipes, valves and tanks with insulating material, especially in unheated areas
- Fix your pipes securely to walls and joists
- Repair dripping taps
- Check you can turn off and on your internal stop valve, usually found under your kitchen sink. You'll then know you can turn your water supply off in an emergency

If you share your water supply pipe with your neighbours

Shared water supply pipes are normally found in older properties, where one water supply pipe serves more than one household. When considering buying a property you may wish to check with the owner to see if it has a shared water supply pipe.

If you experience low water flow and reduced pressure

If you share your water supply pipe with one or more of your neighbours, you may experience low water flow and reduced pressure when your neighbours are using their water appliances or taps at the same time as you. If you experience this, you can consider one of two things:

- **Install a water storage tank**, which is gravity fed or pumped. The tank will automatically top-up when water is used, giving you a constant supply of water. You or your plumber will need to let our water regulations team know if you're considering fitting a pump to make sure any changes you make meet the required standards.

The team can be contacted via our customer centre on 0800 316 9800, Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, or by email at water.regulations@thameswater.co.uk.

- **Arrange for your own water supply pipe to be fitted**, which is connected direct to our communication pipe. This means you will no longer rely on a shared pipe. Instead you'll receive your water supply direct from our mains.

If you decide to have your own water supply pipe fitted, this will need to be at your cost. For more information visit www.thameswater.co.uk/developerservices or call us on 0800 009 3921. We'll give you advice, tell you what we can do for you and provide you with a quote.

If your shared water supply pipe leaks

See our section on finding and fixing leaks, if you think your shared supply pipe is leaking.

Lead water pipes

Before the late 1970s

Before the late 1970s, lead pipes were often used to bring water from our mains into a property. If your property was built after the 1970s, or has been modernised since then, the connecting pipes will probably be made of copper or plastic.

Testing for levels of lead

Lead in the water supply is not usually a problem in our area. This is because our hard water tends to produce a protective layer of limescale between the water and the pipes. Adding a small yet harmless amount of phosphate, which acts like a limescale, at the water treatment process makes sure lead levels are kept very low. We are also proactively replacing lead pipes on our network in areas where lead levels are slightly higher, while at the same time, encouraging our customers to replace lead pipes within their own properties. We regularly check the lead levels in water samples taken from some of our customers' taps.

You can find more information and answers to frequently asked questions about lead in the drinking water supply, as well as details of our lead pipework replacement scheme by visiting our website at www.thameswater.co.uk/lead or by calling us on 0800 316 9800.

Lead content in drinking water

The regulatory standard for lead content in drinking water is 10 parts per million, or 10mg/l. If a water sample taken from your cold kitchen tap contains a concentration of lead greater than 10mg/l we must inform you and your local Environmental Health Department. Details of how you can find more information about lead in the water supply are described in the section above.

Replacing lead water pipes

If you're worried about having lead pipes and would like more information, visit www.thameswater.co.uk/lead. We'll take a water sample from your kitchen tap and discuss the results with you. We'll let you know if your pipes need to be replaced and what we can do to help you.

If you replace your lead water supply pipe, we may replace the lead communication pipe belonging to us, depending on how much lead we find in your water. Please call us on 0800 316 9800 if you are considering replacing your part of a lead service pipe.

If you share a lead supply pipe with your neighbours and you or your neighbours agree to have it replaced, we'll normally ask you to lay separate pipes for each of your properties.

2.4 Finding and fixing leaks

Finding leaks

Leaks on our water mains and pipes

We've an extensive 24 hour programme to detect leaks on our water mains and pipes. Our customers and passers-by also help us by letting us know about leaks in the road, pavement or anywhere else.

We're grateful to everyone who reports leaks and bursts to us, which you can do:

Online - visit www.thameswater.co.uk/leak

By Twitter - just send a tweet with the location to @thameswater or use #tweetaleak, 24 hours a day

By telephone - call our freephone Leakline 0800 714 614 (costs from mobiles may vary)

Leaks on your water supply pipe

When looking for leaks, we may find a leak on a pipe belonging to you. If we find a leak on the water supply pipe serving your home we'll tell you about it and help get the leak repaired to stop the wastage of water. Depending on the size of your supply pipe, we may be able to fix it for free – there is more details about this in the fixing leaks section below. For more information visit our website at www.thameswater.co.uk/customersideleak.

You may have a leak if you experience reduced water pressure or flow at your cold kitchen tap; you see damp or waterlogged areas in your garden during spells of dry weather; hear noisy pipework; or receive an unusually high metered bill.

If you have a metered water supply, take regular meter readings and look for any significant and unexpected increase in your use of water that may indicate a possible leak. You can also carry out a simple test to check for leakage by following these instructions:

- Turn off your inside stop valve in the home - usually under the kitchen sink
- Make sure no cisterns are filling or taps are being used
- Read the meter
- Leave the stop valve shut and then read the meter again in half an hour

The meter dial shouldn't have moved, as you haven't been using water. If it has moved, there may be a leak between the meter and the stop valve in your house.

If you think your water supply pipe is leaking, call us on 0800 316 9800, 24 hours a day. We'll arrange an inspection and let you know what we can do to help you get the leak fixed. It's important all leaks are repaired as quickly as possible and the next section explains how we'll help you.

Find out more at www.thameswater.co.uk/leaks

Fixing leaks

Leaks on our water mains and pipes

We repair any leaks as soon as we can on the water mains and pipes that belong to us, replacing or repairing our water mains and pipes in poor condition. Although we make every effort to repair them quickly, we normally need to gain permission from the highways authority before we dig up a footpath or road.

Over the last decade we've reduced leakage by more than a third, replaced more than 1,600 miles of worn out Victorian water mains, and met our leakage reduction targets set by our regulator Ofwat for each of the past seven years.

Leaks on your water supply pipe

Even though it's your responsibility to fix a leaking water supply pipe, we offer to replace your water supply pipe free of charge so we can stop the wastage of water. This includes shared external supply pipes. This free offer applies to water supply pipes up to a length of 25m and 50mm in diameter.

We'll replace your water supply pipe up to the point it enters the building. For example, in the case of a house converted into flats, we'll replace to the point the water supply pipe enters the main building, but not to individual flats or premises within. We'll make every effort to replace your water supply pipe but if it's impractical to do this we'll carry out a repair instead.

Our free replacement offer applies to the domestic property owner including individual local authority/housing association properties (not blocks of flats) and domestic properties with a shared water supply pipe. We offer one free replacement or repair per owner per property. This means that if you've recently bought a new property and we gave a subsidy or undertook a free replacement/repair for the previous owner, you'll still be eligible for further help. If there's a change in tenancy (not landlord) a further replacement/repair won't be provided free of charge.

The work we undertake for you will be fully guaranteed – for five years if we replace the entire pipe or for one year if we repair it. Our leaflet, *If your water supply has a leak*, has more detailed information about this offer. A copy can be found at the back of this booklet or you can download a version on our website at www.thameswater.co.uk/leaktest.

If you decide not to take up our free offer of replacement or repair and make your own arrangements, you'll be responsible for paying all costs.

If you arrange for your own plumber to do the work and fix the leak, it must be fixed within six weeks of the date we confirmed the leak. If you don't do this we'll send you a legal notice under Section 75 of the Water Industry Act 1991, explaining we will fix the leak in accordance with our statutory duties. We may look to recover reasonable costs from you if we have to issue this legal notice.

Water pipes and fittings inside your home

If you're the owner of the property you're responsible for fixing any leakage or wastage from your pipes, fixtures or fittings inside your property. Under Section 73 of the Water Industry Act 1991, we have a legal duty to ensure water supplied by us isn't wasted, as it's a criminal offence to waste water.

As the owner of the property, you're responsible for all internal water fittings. If you intentionally or negligently cause water supplied by us to be wasted you can face a maximum penalty of £1,000.

If we identify wastage of water from your internal pipes, fixtures or fittings, we'll give you advice about getting the leak fixed. We'll also write to you explaining your legal responsibilities and ask you to complete the repair within six weeks.

You can visit www.thameswater.co.uk/findaplumber for a list of approved plumbers. You may have to pay a call out charge and any other fees for work that you ask the plumber to do.

Please note, when we compiled our approved plumbers' list, the companies listed only employed qualified named plumbers or underground workers who are familiar with the requirements of the water fittings regulations. Although we regularly review this list we can't give an assurance on availability or guarantee their work. We won't get involved in any contractual disputes between a customer and plumber or underground worker.

You may also wish to check your household insurance documents in case your policy extends to cover your water pipes and equipment.

2.5 When we have to interrupt your water supply

We aim to deliver a constant supply of water but sometimes there are interruptions to flow and pressure. This can be caused by a burst main, pumps or their power supply failing, or by planned work.

If we can't put your supply back on within six hours of the interruption, we'll arrange for an alternative supply, such as by water tanker, standpipe or bottled water and inform you where this can be located.

You can find out more about the work we're doing near you by entering your postcode in the What's happening in your area? section of our website at www.thameswater.co.uk. You can also call us on 0800 316 9800. Our lines are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Unplanned interruptions

If there's an unplanned interruption, we'll put your water supply back on within 12 hours of knowing about the problem. If a larger strategic main bursts we guarantee to restore your water supply within 48 hours. We will tell you when your supply will be restored as soon as we can.

If we fail to meet these targets, we'll automatically pay our household customers (usually as a credit to their water services accounts) £30 under our customer guarantee scheme see section 7 - Our guarantees to you, a copy of which can be found at www.thameswater.co.uk/ourcommitment). For each complete extra 24 hour period you have no water, we'll pay you an additional £10 or credit your account with that amount.

If we don't make a payment automatically, because we weren't aware you were affected, you can complete an online claim form at www.thameswater.co.uk/ourcommitment. You can also call us on 0800 316 9800 or write to us at the address listed at the back of this booklet.

Planned interruptions

When we have to interrupt your water supply to mend leaks, connect new customers or make improvements, we aim to give you notice of planned interruptions.

For a planned interruption lasting more than four hours, we'll give you 48 hours' notice in advance of the supply being turned off and tell you how long we think the interruption will last. If we don't we'll automatically pay our household customers £30 under our customer guarantee scheme.

We also aim to restore the water supply within the time we tell you. If we don't achieve this we'll automatically pay our household customers £30. For each extra complete 24 hour period you have no water, we'll pay you an additional £10.

For more information, go to section 7 - Our guarantees to you, a copy of which can be found at www.thameswater.co.uk/ourcommitment.

As part of our programme to check for leaks, we sometimes purposefully turn off sections of the water main. During the day these interruptions are very brief and may be as little as ten minutes. During the night they may be longer. Due to the way we have to do this work, which causes only slight disruption, we are unable to let you know first. If you may be inconvenienced by short interruptions due to leak detection work, call us on 0800 316 9800.

2.6 Pipework and appliance regulations

The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 are national requirements for the design, installation, composition and maintenance of water fixtures and fittings. All water fittings must comply with these regulations and can be subject to inspection.

If you are planning on doing any work on the water fixtures and fittings at your property, they will need to meet the requirements of these regulations. The regulations are designed to protect consumers and the environment from poor water quality, unnecessary waste, misuse and the contamination of wholesome water supplies. For more details search for water fittings regulations on our website www.thameswater.co.uk or call us on 0800 316 9800 and ask for details.

2.7 Electrical earthing

In order to provide protection against electric shock and fire all electrical installations must have an effective electrical earth. This is your responsibility.

Prior to 1967, it was common practice for the incoming customer's water supply pipe to be used for electrical earthing. Since 1967, the incoming water pipe isn't considered an adequate earth and an alternative method must be used.

Like most water companies we now fit plastic water pipes that don't provide an electrical earth. When we do this we'll remind you to check your electrical earthing is adequate.

If you have any doubts over the safety of your electrical installation, particularly if it was installed before 1967, you should contact your electricity company or a qualified electrician.

2.8 Restrictions on water use

We have a duty to provide you with a constant supply of water which is sufficient for domestic purposes, ie drinking, washing, cooking, central heating and sanitation.

Usually we have enough water for everyone. But exceptional weather conditions may reduce the amount of water we have. The examples below explain what we may need to do to save water.

Temporary use bans

Temporary use bans (sometimes known as hosepipe bans) shouldn't be needed very often. Such measures are only imposed when absolutely necessary to make sure there is enough water to meet the essential needs of our household customers. During a hosepipe ban, you can still water your garden using watering cans and buckets. You can find more information about using water wisely by visiting our website at www.thameswater.co.uk/waterwisely.

Reducing water pressure

This reduces the amount of water wasted due to leaks and bursts. On average, we should only have to do this once in 20 years.

Ordinary drought order –non essential water use

Under the Water Resources Act 1991, ordinary drought order restrictions stop some non-essential use of water. Drought order restrictions, on average, shouldn't be needed more than once in 20 years.

Emergency drought order - rota cuts and standpipes

Major cuts in supply on a rota basis and using standpipes, under an emergency drought order, shouldn't be necessary at all under our planned levels of service.

Payments due to emergency restrictions authorised by drought orders

Household customers may be able to claim £10 for each day, or part of a day, that the supply of water for domestic purposes is interrupted as a result of emergency restrictions authorised by drought orders.

However, this will only apply in circumstances where it should be reasonable to expect us to avoid such emergency restrictions.

If payable, the maximum compensation entitlement will be equal to the average household bill in our water supply area for the previous financial year.

Using water wisely

On average we each use 160 litres of water per day, that's over 1,000 litres per week. This is twice as much as 25 years ago. This means water resources throughout our area are seriously stretched with many available sources of fresh water for drinking supplies already in use.

Use water wisely

Use water wisely by taking a shorter shower, not leaving the tap running, or having a water butt to collect rainwater for use in your garden. This will help ensure there's enough to go round in future.

Water saving freebies

We have a range of free water saving devices which you can fit on taps, toilets and showers. These could help you reduce your household water use by up to a quarter.

You can order your freebies, get water saving tips and calculate how much water you use at www.thameswater.co.uk/waterwisely. Or write to us at Water-saving Products, Freepost SCE 8448, PO Box 2747, Reading, RG30 4BR.

What we've done and what we're doing

- Over 1,600 miles of old water mains have been replaced. This is enough to stretch at least 11 times round the M25. This has reduced the number of leaks and bursts and improved supplies for a growing population
- Extended our water pipe replacement programme in London to other areas of the Thames Valley
- Reduced leakage from our 20,000 mile network of water mains by a third in the last decade
- Providing an extra 21 million litres of water per day from new underground sources of water in the Swindon and Oxfordshire areas
- Fitting 225,000 new meters at existing properties, to help manage the demand for water and identify leakage from customers' own pipes
- Promoting the wise use of water in homes and businesses across our region
- We also have built the first desalination plant in the UK of its kind, which can produce fresh drinking water from the tidal River Thames in times of drought

2.9 New connections to our water mains

How to apply for a new water connection

To apply for a new water connection, visit our website at www.thameswater.co.uk/developerservices or call us on 0800 009 3921 and we'll send you an application form.

Once we've received your request we'll inspect the site as soon as possible and send you a quotation. We'll also tell you what you need to do. This will normally include:

- Paying all reasonable costs
- Laying your part of the service pipe, sometimes called the supply pipe, to the property boundary, according to our specifications
- Providing a separate service pipe to each part of a building that is separately occupied
- Making sure your supply and plumbing comply with the Water Supply and Fittings Regulations 1999
- Getting any necessary permission from landowners

Once we've confirmed you have completed all of the above, we must connect the service pipe, where reasonable, to the mains within 21 days. This is subject to getting permission from the highway authority where required.

When a supply to a new or converted property is provided (where one single larger property is made into several smaller dwellings) we require a water meter to be fitted. This will make sure we charge for the actual water used. There's more information about water meters in section 4 - Our charges and your bills.

Paying the cost of a new connection

You'll have to pay the cost of any new connection to our water main. The costs will include:

- Making the connection and any necessary inspections
- Laying the communication pipe (our part of the service pipe) and installing the stop valve and meter
- Traffic management planning
- A fixed payment towards the cost of making sure our pipes can cope with the extra demand for water. This is called the infrastructure charge

You can download our charges leaflet about infrastructure charges in the Charges and tariffs section on our website at www.thameswater.co.uk/literature or call us on 0800 009 3921.

If you don't agree with all of our requirements Ofwat, and in some cases an arbitrator, have powers to settle some disputes. Further details are in section 9 - Arbitration.

Installing your own service connections (self-lay option)

Sometimes, especially at large development sites, the developer has the opportunity to install the water mains and/or service connections under the self-lay option.

This means a water industry registration (WIR) scheme accredited self-lay company can install the water mains and/or service connections and we agree to adopt them. This process is explained in our specific addendum to the UKWIR national code of practice for the self-laying of water mains and services – England and Wales. All water assets to be installed under the self-lay process must be authorised by us before work begins. Failure to do this will result in the water assets not being adopted or connected to the water network.

For more details visit www.thameswater.co.uk/developerservices.

Requesting a new water main

If there's no water main nearby to connect your property to our water supply, you (and your neighbours) can request one to be laid. But you (and your neighbours) will have to pay the costs for this.

You can pay for a new main in a single advance payment or by agreeing to make annual payments within a 12-year period.

The way we charge is regulated by statute and depends on a number of factors. You can find more information at www.thameswater.co.uk/developerservices or call us on 0800 009 3921.

For our part, we'll provide the water main within three months of your agreement. If we fail to meet this deadline and you suffer loss or damage as a result, you may have a legal claim against us.

If there's a dispute about the charge, or if the time limit needs to be extended and we can't agree, either of us can refer the matter to Ofwat.

Your local authority can also requisition a water main for you and your neighbours. For more details visit www.thameswater.co.uk/developerservices.

Alternatively, the new water main can be requested and laid through the self-lay process. This is referred to in the section above.

3. Your wastewater services

We're proud to provide an essential service that's at the heart of daily life health and enjoyment for 14 million customers. Every day at our 350 sewage treatment works we remove and treat more than four billion litres of sewage through our 107,000km of sewers and 2,530 pumping stations.

We also have two sludge powered generators and 21 combined heat and power plants generating 176 GWh of renewable electricity.

This section tells you about:

- Drains, sewers and highway gullies
- Who is responsible for what
- The quality of our treated wastewater
- Blockages
- Sewer flooding
- Building over/near a public sewer
- New sewer connections

Visit our website at www.thameswater.co.uk where you can get help and advice if you think you have problems with your drains and sewers.

3.1 Drains, sewers and highway gullies

What are drains, sewers and gullies?

- A drain carries foul sewage, wastewater or rainfall from a single property
- A lateral drain is an extension of your private drain that lies outside of your property boundary and connects with our public sewer
- A sewer carries sewage, wastewater and rainfall from more than one property
- A highway gully or drain, removes rainwater from roads and pavements
- A culverted watercourse is a visible surface watercourse that has travelled through pipework under roads, driveways or housing developments

Who is responsible for drains, sewers and gullies?



Lateral drains outside a property boundary and sewers

We're responsible for any drains outside of your property boundary, known as a lateral drain, which directly discharges to our public sewer system. We're not responsible for lateral drains that discharge into a cesspool or soakaway. We're also responsible for most sewers. See section below on Private sewers.

In most cases our sewers are in roads or public open spaces. Where our sewers run through private land we have the right of access to maintain and repair them. We'll comply with our code of practice - Pipelaying powers on private land. You can download this from our website at www.thameswater.co.uk/literature or request a copy by calling us on 0800 316 9800.

Surface and underground watercourses

If an underground watercourse passes through your property or land, you're legally defined as a riparian landowner under the Land Drainage Act 1991 and 1994. This means you're responsible for its maintenance and repair. This may also apply to a surface watercourse you use.

Drains inside a property boundary

All underground drainage serving only your property, which is situated within your property boundary, is your responsibility. If you have any problems with your own drains or wastewater pipes, you'll need to get your own plumber. If you have home emergency cover insurance you may be covered for this work.

If you don't have your own plumber or home emergency cover insurance visit www.thameswater.co.uk/findaplumber or call us on 0800 316 9800 and we'll give you advice about approved contractors who should be able to help you. You may have to pay a call out charge along with all repair costs.

The companies listed only employ qualified named plumbers or underground workers who are familiar with the requirements of the water regulations. Although we regularly review this list, we can't give an assurance on availability or guarantee specific work. Also, we can't get involved in any contractual disputes between a customer and plumber or underground worker.

Gullies and drains in the road

It's the responsibility of your highway authority to clean and unblock gullies and drains alongside public roads.

Manhole covers

If you discover a broken manhole cover in the road please let your local highway authority know in the first instance. If there's a broken manhole cover on private land please call us on 0800 316 9800 and we'll come and check who owns it.

Types of sewers

Foul sewers

Foul sewers carry water that has been used for cooking, washing, as well as waste from toilets to our sewage treatment works.

Surface water sewers

Surface water sewers carry rainwater that runs off roofs, some roads and other hard surfaces. If we take away your rainwater from your property but don't treat it because our sewer carries it to a watercourse, or soakaway, you are still liable to pay the surface water drainage charge.

Most properties are connected to our sewers for this purpose but some aren't connected. If no rainwater drains to our sewers from your property, you don't have to pay for this service. But if any rainwater from your property does, full surface water drainage charges still apply. Please refer to section 4 - Our charges and your bills for more information.

Combined sewers

Normally foul and surface water drainage are kept separate and are carried away from your property in different pipework. All new properties should have separate drains for foul and surface water drainage and it's important the wastewater from washing machines and dishwashers is connected to your foul drain.

Where there are combined public sewers in the road, the pipework in and around your property may either carry both wastewater and rainfall in a single drain or in two separate drains and then connect with our sewers.

Private sewers

On 1 October 2011, we became responsible for a lot of private sewers that were previously the responsibility of property owners. Not all private sewers were included. There are some cases where the property owner remains responsible for sections of pipe between the property/building and the lateral drain or private sewer owned by us.

To help you understand how the sewer transfer affects you visit www.thameswater.co.uk/privatesewers. You can also visit www.defra.gov.uk for more information.

Private pumping stations

Some properties, for example small housing developments, are connected to a private pumping station before they connect to our main sewers. You're likely to know if this is the case with your property.

The Government plans to transfer these pumping stations to wastewater companies, such as ourselves, on 1 October 2016. Until this time the owner(s) of the pumping station remains responsible for maintenance and repair. Pumping stations eligible for transfer typically serve more than one property.

3.2 The quality of treated wastewater

The Environment Agency (EA) regularly checks the treated water we release from our sewage treatment works. The EA maintains a public register of these results. You can ask to inspect this register by calling the EA on 08708 506 506.

At the time of publishing this code all our treatment facilities are working within the EA's compliance guidelines.

3.3 Blockages

We clear around 80,000 blockages from our sewers every year. Blocked sewers can lead to sewage spilling out of manholes, into properties and even rivers.

Many thousands of drains and sewers become blocked because of misuse. For example, flushing away fat or grease down the loo or sink rather than putting it in the bin.

You may have a blocked drain or sewer, if it's difficult to flush your loo; water drains away very slowly; there's a smell coming from your drains; or there's an overflowing manhole nearby.

If you think you have a problem with the drains and sewers serving your property, or if you notice wastewater flowing into a river or stream, please call us on 0800 316 9800. One of our team will be here to help, 24 hours a day.

What causes blockages?

The majority of blockages are caused by the wrong things being put down the loo or flushed away down the sink and drains. Sewers are only designed to take away human waste, toilet tissue and water.

Cooking fat and oil

Cooking fat and oil congeal in your drains and our sewers. They form a thick layer around the pipe and prevent sewage from flowing, often causing the sewage to travel back up the drains.

Cooking fat should be allowed to cool, put in a bag and disposed of carefully. Used oil should be placed in a sealed container and disposed of according to your local authority's guidance.

Other items

Items like nappies, wet wipes, sanitary products, tights and cotton buds should be thrown away by wrapping them in a bag and putting them in a bin, along with other paper based products such as kitchen roll.

Bin it, don't block it

Visit our website at www.thameswater.co.uk/binit where you can download our leaflet Bin it – don't block it. This leaflet gives good advice about getting rid of waste products safely.

Who clears blockages?

We clear blockages found in the public sewer. If we are unsure of where the blockage is we will come and investigate. If it's found in the public sewer we will clear it or we'll let you know if you need to make your own arrangements for it to be removed if it's in your private drain. Alternatively, for a fixed fee, we can spend up to two hours investigating and clearing the blockage. Just call us on the telephone number below if you'd like us to do this for you. If the blockage happens again within seven days, we'll look at it again for free.

It may be our responsibility if one of the following applies:

- The problem is outside your property boundary
- More than one property is having problems
- There's widespread sewer flooding in your area

If you're unsure or you would like further advice call us on 0800 316 9800.

When we'll get to you

We'll try to get to you within six hours of being told about the problem. But, depending on the severity of the blockage, this could range from one to 24 hours. When you call us about the problem we'll let you know when we'll be able to get to you. When we visit we'll confirm if the blocked pipework belongs to us or to you.

If the blockage is in your drain

Your own plumber should be able to help you clear a blockage from your private drain. Alternatively, some insurance policies cover the cost of blockage clearances. You may wish to check the terms of any policy you might have to see if you are covered.

If you don't have your own plumber or home emergency cover visit www.thameswater.co.uk/findaplumber or call us on 0800 316 9800 and we'll give you advice about water regulations approved plumbers who may be able to help you. You may have to pay a call out charge along with all repair costs.

The companies listed only employ qualified named plumbers or underground workers, who are familiar with the requirements of the Water Regulations. Blockage clearance services may not be offered by all companies who are part of this scheme. Although we regularly review this list, we cannot give assurance on availability or guarantee their work. We will not get involved in any contractual disputes between a customer and plumber or underground worker.

In our lateral drains and sewers

If the blockage is in our lateral drain or public sewer we will clear it for free.

3.4 Sewer flooding

Sewer flooding is unacceptable and we treat all cases with the highest priority. It's an unpleasant experience and we're committed to reducing the risk of sewer flooding and to offer help when it does occur.

If you've been flooded by our public sewer please call us on 0800 316 9800 and one of our team will be here to help, 24 hours a day. If you experience sewer flooding inside your home we'll make every effort to attend your property within two hours. However, if we're dealing with a major event that affects a number of properties it may take longer than this.

Keep away from flooded areas

If you do experience flooding make sure you keep pets and children away from flooded grassed areas. Ultraviolet light in sunlight helps kill off bacteria. But the time taken varies according to the weather. As a guide it takes:

- nine days when warm and sunny
- 20 days when damp and cool
- 25 days when wet and cold

Our sewers work hard

Climate change, population growth and the paving over of green spaces that provide natural drainage are putting increasing pressure on our sewers. This is often made worse by people putting unsuitable products down the sink or loo.

Many areas have separate sewers to take foul waste and rainwater. But in much of London and some other built up areas the sewer system is combined. This means foul sewage and wastewater from kitchens and toilets mixes with rainfall.

During a heavy storm the flow in the sewer is much greater and can reach maximum capacity. When this happens sewage can overflow from manholes and gullies and flood land, gardens and rivers. In the worst cases sewage can even flood homes.

Our investment in flood alleviation schemes takes into account the severity and frequency of flooding in specific areas. It's therefore important you let us know of any flooding you experience, so we can keep our records up-to-date.

Sewer flooding from your drains

If flooding is caused by a blockage in your drains, we can help you. For a fixed fee, we can spend up to two hours investigating and clearing the blockage. Call us on 0800 316 9800 if you would like us to do this for you. If the blockage happens again within seven days, we'll look at it again for free. Alternatively, you can make your own arrangements for the blockage to be cleared.

Sewer flooding from our sewers

If the flooding is caused by our sewers, we'll attend within two to four hours depending on the severity of the flooding and whether the flooding is internal or external. We'll investigate the cause of the problem, get it fixed as soon as we can and offer you as much help as possible.

Clean up service

If our public sewer has caused flooding, we'll carry out a clean-up service of the affected area(s) at no cost to you. We aim to do this on the same day we know about the flooding. But if a large area is affected, or flood waters have not yet drained away, we'll try to get to your property within 48 hours of us finding out about the flood. Our response times may vary during periods of exceptional weather.

Our clean up service includes:

- Litter picking
- Removal of solids
- Washing down affected areas
- Pumping out basements
- Disinfection

It doesn't include the removal or disposal of internal decorations, carpets, furniture or flooring.

Contacting your insurers

It's important you contact your household insurance provider straight away and tell them about any damage caused by the flooding. If you don't do this it may affect any insurance claim you need to make.

We may not be liable for damage caused by sewer flooding when it occurs for reasons beyond our control. We are only responsible for the damage if the flooding is caused as a result of our negligence. We can't be responsible for what is put into our sewers or the amount of rain which falls and the law recognises we shouldn't be responsible for any flooding damage caused as a result of this. We are also unable to consider claims for any distress caused by flooding where we have no legal liability.

Our customer guarantee scheme

Although we don't generally accept liability for sewer flooding you may be entitled to a payment under our customer guarantee scheme where the effluent has come from our sewer system. These payments are described below.

Internal sewer flooding

Subject to some limited exceptions, customers whose buildings have experienced internal flooding will receive a clean-up service, a letter confirming what action is to be taken and a customer guarantee scheme payment.

The payment will be made automatically unless we couldn't have known about the flooding. If we didn't know, you'll have three months in which to claim the payment. The payment we give is equivalent to the annual wastewater charges for your property, with a minimum of £150 up to a maximum of £1,000 each time such flooding happens. In most cases, this payment will be made as a credit to your water services account.

External sewer flooding

Where flooding doesn't enter your property but you've suffered loss of use by the flooding on your land or property, you can claim a payment. The payment will be equal to half your annual wastewater charges for your property.

The claim should be supported by a written statement explaining how you have been affected by the external flooding. In assessing your claim we'll consider what parts of your land have been flooded, the duration and extent of the flooding, and whether your access and use of your land has been affected. To make this easier for you we do have a specific form that we can give you which will help you to describe the impact that this had on you.

The payment we'll make will be a minimum payment of £75 and a maximum of £500. A payment will be made each time such flooding happens, subject to some limited exceptions. In most cases this payment will be made as a credit to your water services account.

See section 7 - Our guarantees to you. A copy can be found at www.thameswater.co.uk/ourcommitment.

Properties at risk of flooding

It's important you know if your property may be at risk of sewer flooding and whether you need insurance against this risk. If you are experiencing sewer flooding at your home please call us straight away on 0800 316 9800. Our lines are open 24 hours a day.

If you want to find out if the area where your property is located is liable to sewer flooding please call our Property Searches team on 0845 070 9148 for further information and costs. Our lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am until 5pm. You can also visit our website at www.thameswater-propertysearches.co.uk for more details.

Repeated incidents of internal flooding

Unfortunately some properties suffer repeated incidents of internal flooding and we're unable to offer any short-term solution.

If we've confirmed with you that your property is at risk of repeated internal flooding, we'll regularly monitor the situation and offer immediate help. We maintain a special list of all these properties and have a dedicated sewer flooding line 0800 056 2625 to help customers in this situation as detailed earlier in this section.

If your property is on our list, we'll make a minimum payment of £500 and a maximum payment of £1,000 each time flooding happens and we'll provide a full clean up service.

You are not eligible for an external flooding payment if you're entitled to an internal flooding payment due to the same incident.

3.5 Building over/near to a public sewer

Special provisions apply if you propose to build either over or close to a public sewer. You may need our consent to do this. For more information visit www.thameswater.co.uk/developerservices or call us on 0800 009 3921.

We keep up-to-date records showing the approximate position of known public sewers. You can arrange to visit your council office to see them or call us on 0800 316 9800. If you discover a possible public sewer which you weren't aware of during the course of work undertaken at your property please let us know.

If you're buying a property your survey should confirm if a public sewer runs across your land or near it. You should also know if you're connected to our wastewater and/or surface water drainage pipes.

3.6 New sewer connections

You can connect your drain to our sewers, as long as it's practicable to do so and you pay all reasonable costs. You'll need to give us details of the drain to be connected and how the connection will be made.

We'll let you know within 14 days whether we accept your proposals. We'll also tell you what the costs will be. We can refuse permission if we think the connection will harm our sewers. For example, we'll not allow a foul drain connection to a surface water sewer. If you don't agree with our decision you can appeal to Ofwat.

You can either ask us to undertake the work and we'll supply you with a quote or you can make your own arrangements. If you, or your contractor, make the connection you'll need to liaise with the highway authority about any work that needs to be carried out in the street or on a public footpath.

In any event, you'll have to pay:

- A fee for our inspection of the work if you or your contractor makes the connection or the quoted amount if we make the connection for you
- A fixed payment towards our costs of making sure our sewers can cope with the extra demand. This is called the infrastructure charge

If you arrange to get the work done yourself and we agree to your connection, you must give us at least 14 days' notice of the day when this will be completed. We'll inspect the connection to ensure it meets our standards. You can find more information on the wastewater services section of our website at www.thameswater.co.uk/developerservices.

Who do I contact if I need a new sewer or drain?

Sometimes a new sewer may be required because there's no public sewer available to serve your property. Call us on 0800 009 3921 for more information. Our lines are open Monday to Friday from 8am to 5pm. You'll find more details and further contact information on our website at www.thameswater.co.uk/developerservices.

New sewer requisitions

You can ask us to provide a new sewer to serve several properties. This is known as a requisition. A notice requiring a new sewer can be served on us by:

- You, on your own
- You and your neighbours
- Your local authority on your behalf

Whoever serves the notice will be responsible for ensuring that all costs are paid. A single payment can be made in advance or annual payments within a 12-year period. The way we charge for this is regulated by statute. We'll be happy to give you full details on request.

If practical we must provide the sewer within six months of your agreement. If we fail to meet this deadline and you suffer loss or damage as a result, you may have a legal claim against us. Please call us first on 0800 009 3921 so we can discuss the situation with you.

If there's a dispute about the charge we make, or if the time limit needs to be extended and we can't agree on how long, either of us can refer the dispute to Ofwat. See section 9 - Arbitration.

Requisition of a lateral drain

You may also ask us to provide a lateral drain from the public sewer to the boundary of your property. If so, you'll have to pay all reasonable costs. If there's a dispute about the cost either party can refer the dispute to Ofwat.

When we're required to provide a new sewer

We may be required to provide a new sewer if the existing private drainage system causes significant environmental or amenity problems. Examples of problems include:

- Faulty cesspits or septic tanks
- Pollution of a ditch, stream or river
- Smell

We'll investigate and decide on the best course of action to solve the problem. A pack has been prepared by the Environment Agency (EA) so residents can make an application. Visit www.environment-agency.gov.uk.

If we reject an application and you disagree with our decision you can appeal to the EA. Call us on 0800 009 3921 for more information.

4. Our charges and your bills

We're proud to be one of the cheapest providers of water and wastewater services. In this section, you can find out more about:

- Our charges and how they're calculated
- All about your bill
- Surface water drainage, highway drainage and foul water
- Unmetered and metered properties
- Asking us to fit a water meter
- Progressive metering

You can also find more information at www.thameswater.co.uk/yourbill.

4.1 Our charges

Price reviews

Ofwat, our economic regulator, reviews our prices every five years and sets the level of charges for each year within that five-year period. This price review takes into consideration the day-to-day costs of running our business as well as the investment required to maintain and improve our water and wastewater pipes, sewers and treatment works.

Our charges scheme

Every financial year (1 April to 31 March) we publish our charges scheme and tariff leaflets which are approved by the Consumer Council for Water and Ofwat. These leaflets include helpful information about the way we charge you, along with our range of tariffs. Copies can be downloaded at www.thameswater.co.uk/literature or you can call us on 0800 316 9800 and we can post copies to you.

4.2 Your bill

Who sends your bill?

The majority of our customers receive both clean water and wastewater services from us. The bills we send you will detail both your clean and wastewater charges.

For those customers who receive only one of our services, the way you receive your bills may be different depending on where you live and which service we provide. You may either receive separate bills from your clean water and waste water providers or you may receive just one bill which includes the clean/wastewater charges on behalf of the other company. If this happens, the company who sends you your bill will forward on your payment accordingly.

In any circumstance, if you receive a bill from us and you don't think we should have sent you one please call us on 0800 980 8800.

Paying your bill

If you use our services you must expect to pay for them.

If you're the occupier of a property you're liable for the charges due unless we have a written agreement that says otherwise. For example, we may have an agreement with your landlord saying they're responsible for the charges.

Landlords and tenants

Where a landlord has agreed to pay the charges we'll send the bill to your landlord. However, we don't get involved in disputes between landlords and tenants about who pays.

We'll normally bill the occupier of the property if there's any dispute about who makes payment.

Understanding your bill

We try to make sure your bill is easy to understand. You'll find a summary of our charges along with the payments you've made. You'll also find other useful information about how your bill is worked out and how to pay.

To get more help in understanding your bill, visit our interactive guide at www.thameswater.co.uk/bill.

If you don't have a water meter your bill is based on an unmetered annual set amount plus a fixed charge. If you have a water meter your bill is based on your meter readings plus a fixed charge. These are explained in more detail in sections 4.5 and 4.6 of this document. If you have water and wastewater services from us these charges are shown separately.

Our customer guarantee scheme

If you write to us to query the accuracy of your bill we will respond to you as quickly as possible but in any case, within ten working days of receiving your contact. If we do not provide a substantive response to your query within ten working days you will automatically receive a payment of £30. In most cases this payment will be made as a credit to your water services account.

See section 7 - Our guarantees to you, for more information. A copy of which can be found at www.thameswater.co.uk/ourcommitment.

4.3 Paying your bill

You have a choice of how to pay your bill. All these services are free unless otherwise stated:

- Direct Debit - protected by the Direct Debit guarantee. To set up a Direct Debit visit www.thameswater.co.uk/directdebit or call us on 0800 980 8800.
- Debit/credit card - online at www.thameswater.co.uk/pay. You can also use our automated self-service facility 24 hours a day by calling us on 0800 980 8800.
- Online banking - by quoting your bank account number and Thames Water account number 00286125 sort code 57-27-53
- At a bank – if you pay at your own bank or a branch of the National Westminster Bank, this service is usually free of charge
- At a PayPoint facility - displaying the PayPoint symbol
- By post – send your cheque or postal order to Thames Water Utilities Ltd, PO Box 234, Swindon, SN38 3TW
- In cash at a post office – subject to the Post Office's processing fee

For more details about the ways you can pay and options for spreading your payments (payment frequencies) please visit www.thameswater.co.uk/pay or call us on the telephone number above.

Difficulty paying?

If you're having trouble paying your water bill please call us straight away on 0800 980 8800. We can talk together about the best way to manage your payments and let you know what help is available.

Our leaflet How to get help if you can't pay your bill, tells you what we'll do to help you. A copy is enclosed in the back pocket of this document. We can't reduce the size of your current bill but we can look at ways to make paying your bill easier. This leaflet also explains the steps we'll take if you don't contact us or don't agree with us how you can make payment. This includes possible court action which will affect your credit rating. Although much of the information is mentioned in this chapter, the leaflet has more detailed information.

In financial hardship or difficulty?

If you're facing financial hardship or difficulty, you can get help from a Citizens Advice Bureau or Money Advice Centre. Section 4.4 below explains more about the affordability measures we have available to help those customers who need it most to keep on top of their water and wastewater charges.

Our customer guarantee scheme

If you write to us to request a change in the way in which you pay your bill, ie by method of payment or timescales, we will respond to you as quickly as possible. If we cannot agree to your request we will let you know within five working days of receiving your contact. If we do not provide a substantive response to your request within five working days, you will automatically receive a payment of £30. In most cases this payment will be made as a credit to your water services account.

See section 7 - Our guarantees to you, for more information. A copy of which can be found at www.thameswater.co.uk/ourcommitment.

4.4 Affordability

We understand that paying water bills can be a worry, particularly for those customers who are on a low income or are in financial hardship.

We have a range of tariffs and services available to help those customers who need it most to keep on top of their water bill.

More information about the schemes and tariffs detailed below can be found on our website at www.thameswater.co.uk/helpaying. All eligible benefits listed in this section are subject to current legislation.

WaterSure

If you, or anyone else in your household, receives a means tested benefit you may be able to join our WaterSure Scheme. This means your metered bill will be capped at a fixed annual charge. The reduction will take effect from the beginning of the charge period in which the application is made and it must be renewed annually.

To qualify, your household must:

- Have a water meter
- Receive a means tested benefit
- Have a large family (three or more children under the age of 19, living at the same property and for whom child benefit is being received)
- Have someone who has a verifiable medical condition requiring the use of extra water

| WaterSure - eligible benefits | WaterSure - verifiable medical conditions |
|--|---|
| Housing benefit | Incontinence |
| Income-related employment and support allowance or income support | Weeping skin diseases, for example eczema or psoriasis |
| Income-based job seekers allowance | Abdominal stoma |
| Working tax credit | Crohn's disease |
| Pension credit | Ulcerative colitis |
| Universal credit | Varicose ulceration |
| Child tax credit (except families in receipt of the family element only) | Renal failure requiring home dialysis (except where NHS makes a contribution toward water costs) |
| | Desquamation (flaky skin loss) |
| | Other medical conditions which have been diagnosed by a medical practitioner and requires the use of substantial amounts of water |

WaterSure Plus

WaterSure Plus is a new tariff we've developed as part of our affordability commitment and will be introduced from 2014/15. The purpose of the tariff is to help customers on lower incomes pay for their water bills.

You, or someone living in your property, have to be in receipt of certain qualifying benefits (detailed below) to be eligible for the tariff, and the value of your water and wastewater bill has to account for a minimum of 3% of your total household income. Residential customers in both metered and unmetered properties can apply for WaterSure Plus.

Qualifying benefits are:

- Housing benefit
- Income-related employment and support allowance or income support
- Income-based job seekers allowance
- Working tax credit
- Child tax credit (except families in receipt of the family element only)
- Pension credit
- Universal credit

Eligible customers will receive a 50 % reduction on their total bill. This will take effect from the date we receive the application and must be renewed annually.

Water Direct

Many customers with arrears on their account find the easiest way to get back on track with paying their water and wastewater charges is to have the payments taken directly from their benefits. The scheme is known as Water Direct and the qualifying benefits are:

- Income-related employment and support allowance or income support
- Pension credit
- Universal credit

Eligible customers will have a weekly payment taken from their benefits to cover the normal yearly water charges plus a contribution toward paying off the arrears. These payments will continue until the arrears have been cleared.

Customer assistance fund

The customer assistance fund helps customers who are in financial hardship and have debts with us. There are no qualifying benefits to be eligible to apply for assistance so any residential customer can ask for help.

Each application is considered based upon individual circumstances. Our specialist team will assess income and expenditure to decide if a grant can be made toward the arrears owed. If successful, a payment will be made directly to the applicant's water services account.

How to find out more or apply for assistance

If you think you are eligible for assistance, would like to apply, or simply find out more about any of these tariffs or schemes, please visit our website at www.thameswater.co.uk/helppaying. You can also call our extra care services team on 0800 009 3652 (textphone: 0800 316 6899).

Using water wisely

Having a water meter fitted can be one of the easiest steps toward taking control of your water charges. We believe water meters are the fairest way to pay as you are only charged for the water you use.

For water saving tips and ideas, visit our website at www.thameswater.co.uk/waterwisely or to get hold of some of our free water-saving devices visit www.thameswater.co.uk/freebies.

If you don't have a water meter and would like to find out more, you can find more information at www.thameswater.co.uk/meter or call us on 0800 980 8800.

4.5 Surface water drainage, highway drainage and foul water

Wastewater service charges include:

- The taking away of rainwater (surface water) from your property
- Highway drainage
- The removal of foul water
- Wastewater treatment

Removal of rainwater (surface water drainage)

Most properties are connected to our sewers for taking away rainwater. Where no rainwater drains into our sewers, the rainwater will drain into a watercourse or soakaway.

If you believe rainwater from your property doesn't drain to our sewers, you can get more information at www.thameswater.co.uk/swd under frequently asked questions. Or you can call us on 0800 980 8800. Your current bill shows you the actual reduction for the period of that bill, if you do qualify.

You'll need to tell us what the drainage arrangements are for your property. We'll then check our records or visit your property. If you're eligible for a reduction the rebate will normally apply from 1 April in the financial year when you make your application. However, if your property was built after 1 April 2001, the rebate will be backdated to when you moved in up to a maximum of six years.

Highway drainage

Highway drainage is the rainwater that runs into the highway drains and into our public sewers. This then becomes our responsibility to treat.

Foul water

Foul water is the wastewater from sinks, baths and toilets which is then treated at our wastewater treatment works.

4.6 Unmetered bills

If you don't have a water meter at your property your bill is based on an unmetered charge basis. This will usually be the chargeable (rateable) value of your property. If you asked us to fit a meter and for some reason we couldn't, you may be on our assessed household charge, based on your number of bedrooms.

The chargeable (rateable) value of your property

This is based on the rateable value of your property, as set by the District Valuers (now part of the Inland Revenue) and as shown in the last published valuation list (31 March 1990).

Although the local authorities' rating system was abolished in 1990, it still remains valid for calculating water services charges for customers who don't have a water meter.

Council tax bands have no bearing on the chargeable value of your property. In cases where your council tax band is changed, your chargeable value remains the same.

Your annual charge is calculated at 'so many pence in the pound' of your property's chargeable value. The 'pence in the pound' varies to reflect the geographical variations in house types across our region. These charges are listed in our unmetered charges leaflet which can be downloaded at www.thameswater.co.uk/literature.

So, if your property's rateable value is £200 and your pence per pound charge is 109p for water and 62p for wastewater, your total charge is £218 for water and £124 for wastewater services, plus fixed charges.

Fixed charges

These charges include the day to day costs of maintaining our water and wastewater pipes, sewers and treatment works, as well as looking after our customer accounts. These costs are not affected by the amount of water you use or the size of your property.

Assessed household charge

If you ask us to fit a meter and for some reason we can't, we'll make sure you're on the best unmetered tariff for you. For example, we'll offer you the assessed household charge, based on your number of bedrooms or single occupancy, if this is less than you're paying now.

We currently have five bands

- Band 1 - one bedroom or none
- Band 2 - two bedrooms
- Band 3 - three bedrooms
- Band 4 - four bedrooms
- Band 5 - five bedrooms or more

For customers who live on their own, we also have a single occupier tariff.

You will be offered the assessed household charge only if you ask for a meter but we find we can't fit one. There's lots more information on our website at www.thameswater.co.uk/ahc or call us on 0800 980 8800.

Paying your unmetered bill

Payment is due in full on 1 April, at the beginning of the charging year. However, you can spread the cost over the year if you wish. You can choose to pay:

- For the whole year by 1 April
- In two equal payments, payable by 1 April and 1 October
- In monthly instalments, payable from 1 April and monthly thereafter

If you move into a property after 1 April, then we'll let you know when your payment is due. Or, you can set up a two, eight, ten or twelve monthly payment plan with us.

You can set up a payment plan at www.thameswater.co.uk/directdebit, use our self-service facility by calling 0800 980 8800, or fill in and return the Direct Debit form on your latest bill. Even if you don't have a bank or building society account you can still have a payment plan.

If you're on a low/fixed income we can offer weekly or fortnightly payment plans. Please call us on 0800 980 8800 for more information.

4.7 Metered bills

If you have a water meter we charge you on the amount of water recorded by your meter plus a fixed charge. The wastewater services part of the bill is also based on your meter readings.

Sending your bill

We'll send your bill every six months based on an actual meter reading whenever we can. If we send you an estimated bill we'll adjust your bill when the meter is next read. Or, if safe to do so, you can read your own meter and let us know your meter reading at www.thameswater.co.uk/submitreading. We'll then send you an updated bill. You can also call us on 0800 980 8800.

We aim to read your meter at least once a year, to ensure you receive at least one bill per year based on an actual meter reading rather than an estimate.

Worried about an unexplained high bill

Check your usage

If your meter reading is higher than usual and you feel you haven't used more water than normal, then visit www.thameswater.co.uk/yourbill. Here you'll find a water usage table and advice on how to check for leaks. Alternatively, please call us on 0800 980 8800, so we can offer advice and if necessary arrange a visit to investigate.

If you think you've got a leak

If the problem is a leak, we're responsible if the leak is on the meter itself. Legally you're responsible for repairing leaks on your water supply pipe but we'll offer to fix the leak for free, see section 2.4 - Finding and fixing leaks. If you think you have a leak on your supply pipe call us on 0800 316 9800 for more advice and information.

If there's a leak on your water supply pipe, we'll adjust your charges for the first leak at your property, as long as (i) the leak is fixed within six weeks of us confirming the leak; (ii) it wasn't caused by your negligence and (iii) wasn't one you should have known about and could have repaired sooner. If we adjust your water supply charges we'll also adjust the wastewater charges.

We won't adjust your water charges for any future leaks, but you may be entitled to an adjustment of your wastewater charges.

You're also responsible for the water pipes and appliances inside your home. This includes maintenance and repairs, at your cost.

Setting up a metered payment plan

If you've got a water meter you don't have to pay your water bill in one go. You can arrange a monthly payment plan instead by visiting www.thameswater.co.uk/pay, completing the Direct Debit form attached to your bill or by calling us on 0800 980 8800. Even if you don't have a bank or building society account you can still have a payment plan.

Once we've received your request we'll set up your payment plan and let you know in advance what your regular payments will be.

We'll review your payment plan annually to make sure your regular instalments are sufficient to cover your charges for the coming year.

Fixed charges

These charges include the day to day costs of maintaining our water and wastewater pipes, sewers and treatment works, looking after our customer accounts, as well as reading your meter. These costs are not affected by the amount of water you use.

Moving out of your home

Reading your meter on your last day

If you're moving home please read your meter on your last day if you can and it's safe to do so. You can then give us your meter reading and new address details by completing the online form at www.thameswater.co.uk/move, or you can call us on 0800 980 8800.

If you're unable to read your meter

If you're unable to read your meter, we can send you an estimate of your final bill. Or you can tell us up to 28 days before you move so we can arrange to read your meter.

If you give us less than two days prior notice you may remain responsible for the metered charges up to:

- 28 days after we find you're no longer responsible for the account; or
- The date the meter is normally read (the end of the charging period); or
- The date a new occupier tells us they're responsible for the charges at the property

Once we've got all the information we need, we'll send you your final bill within six working days. If there's a credit on your account we'll either transfer your credit to your new Thames Water account, or process a refund within five to 15 days, depending on the amount we owe you and the way you made your payments.

Moving into your home

If you move into a metered property, you'll have to pay the metered charges. You can't change to an unmetered basis of charge.

Please read your meter on the date you move in, if you are able to and it is safe for you to do so. You can then give us your meter reading and set up your new metered account using our online form at www.thameswater.co.uk/move or call us on 0800 980 8800.

If you are unable to read your meter please call us on the above number so we can arrange to come and do this for you. We also have a legal right to meter properties where there is a total change in occupation.

Your water meter

We prefer to fit water meters outside, usually in the footpath, where they are easy for us to read and maintain without having to disturb you.

Reliability of water meters

Water meters are extremely reliable and accurate. They're approved for accuracy by manufacturers and trading standards officers before leaving the factory.

Under and over recording

If a meter isn't working properly it tends to under record rather than over record. So, where meter readings are higher than expected, this generally means more water has been used since the last meter reading or you've got a leak on your water supply pipe, or inside your home.

You don't think your meter's working properly

If you think your meter isn't working properly please contact us by visiting www.thameswater.co.uk/contactus or call us on 0800 980 8800. We'll investigate, let you know what we've found, and replace your meter if we need to.

Adjusting your account

If your bill would have been less because your meter has been faulty, we'll credit your account with an amount we think you have used based on previous usage. If your bill would have been higher we'll only backdate additional charges if (i) we've sent your meter away to be tested; (ii) it's proven your meter gave the wrong measurements and (iii) we've sent a copy of the test results to you.

Testing meters

If you ask us to test your meter we can either do this ourselves or we can ask an independent company to carry out full weights and measures testing off-site.

If you would like your meter to be tested please visit www.thameswater.co.uk/contactus or call us on 0800 980 8800 and ask for your meter to be checked. Alternatively, you can write to us at: Thames Water, PO Box 286, Swindon, SN38 2RA. If your meter is found to be accurate we reserve the right to make a charge for this service which is currently up to a maximum £70.

Tampering with meters

It is a criminal offence to tamper with a water meter. Water meters remain the property of Thames Water.

Common billing agreements

A common billing agreement may be set up if we've been unable to meter each separate property unit within, for example, a block of flats that share a common water supply pipe.

This is where a single landlord, freeholder, managing agent or other person or body, known as the consumer, accepts responsibility for a single bill. This single bill is the combined charge for all the properties supplied by the shared pipe.

The charge the bill payer may pass on to each domestic customer is limited under the water resale order. For details about the provisions of the water resale order, visit the Ofwat website at www.ofwat.gov.uk.

4.8 Asking us to fit a water meter

Benefits of having a meter

Many households have decided to have a water meter fitted, free of charge. For lots of customers, this has saved them money. It helps you keep control of what you use and what you pay.

Visit www.thameswater.co.uk/meter and select metered charges, where you'll find a charges table. This will give you an idea of what your likely metered charges will be based on your typical usage and the number of people living with you.

Ask us to fit a meter

You can ask us to fit a meter by visiting www.thameswater.co.uk/requestameter and complete the online request form. Alternatively, call us on 0800 980 8800 and use our automated self-service facility.

What we'll do next

Once you have asked us to fit a meter we'll aim to do so within 50 calendar days. After your meter has been fitted, you will be charged on the water recorded by your meter plus a fixed charge.

Meters are read in specific geographical areas. So you may have to wait a while before you receive your first metered bill.

If we don't fit your water meter within 50 calendar days, you'll only pay fixed charges from the date we received your request, to the date we actually fit your meter. You'll then be charged for your future water and wastewater services based on meter readings.

Where we'll fit your meter

We prefer to fit your new meter outside. If we can't do this we may install it inside your home if this is the only place we can fit it. This service is free.

If you decide you would like the meter fitted in a different place to the one we choose, and this would cost more, we will ask you to pay the difference in cost. However, if you are registered disabled and the meter needs to be in a different location so you can access it more easily, we'll re-site the meter wherever we can at our cost.

When will I receive my first metered bill?

It could take up to six months for you to receive your first metered bill. We read our meters on six monthly cycles. The sending of your first bill will depend on when water meters are next due to be read in your area.

What if I change my mind?

If you request a meter and decide you want to go back to an unmetered basis of charge, you can do so. But, you must request this within the first year of having the meter, or within one month of receiving your second metered bill, whichever is later.

If you decide to do this, the meter will be left in the ground, but you won't be billed on it. Subsequent occupiers will then be billed on a metered basis and won't be able to change back.

What we'll do if we can't fit a meter

If for some reason we can't fit a meter, we'll offer you our assessed household charge, if this charge is less than what you're currently paying.

This charge is based on your number of bedrooms. We currently have five bands as follows:

- Band 1 - one bedroom or none
- Band 2 - two bedrooms
- Band 3 - three bedrooms
- Band 4 - four bedrooms
- Band 5 - five bedrooms or more

For customers who live on their own, we also have a single occupier tariff.

4.9 Compulsory metering

Fairest way to pay

We all have a part to play to make sure there's enough water for everyone, now and in the future. As part of our campaign to get everyone using water wisely, we encourage our customers to have a water meter fitted if they don't already have one.

Having a water meter means you can monitor the amount of water you use and pay for your usage, plus a fixed charge. This is the fairest way to pay for water.

When we fit meters

Meters are fitted in all new homes and properties with sprinklers or swimming pools. We also have the legal right to compulsorily fit a meter at a domestic property if there's a total change in occupation.

Garden sprinklers and swimming pools

We fit a water meter at properties where there's a garden sprinkler or an automatically filled swimming pool with a capacity greater than 10,000 litres. This is due to the large amount of extra water they use.

The average sprinkler, for example, uses 540 litres of water per hour, equivalent to the amount used by a family of four in one day. Normal unmetered water bills do not cover this kind of usage. So, if you have a garden sprinkler or a swimming pool which is automatically filled, please let us know so we can fit a water meter.

Water resources management plan

Every five years we, like all other water companies in England and Wales, publish a water resources management plan. This plan sets out what we aim to do to make sure there's enough water for future generations. More information our plans can be found at www.thameswater.co.uk/wrmp.

4.10 Progressive Metering

Rolling out water meters is at the centre of our overall plan to reduce demand for water over the next 25 years. Fitting water meters at all properties across our region means we'll understand exactly how much water is being used by customers, and how much is being lost in transit through leaks. It will help us fix more leaks, quicker.

Meters encourage customers to use less water, 12% less on average. In the areas where we are fitting meters we're encouraging customers to sign-up for free home visits, where we'll install the latest water saving devices and provide expert advice on how to use less water, thereby saving customers' money.

To ensure customers have time to understand their water usage, and how it may impact their bill, we'll not be switching them to a metered charge until two years after the meter is installed. If they wish to switch earlier they can do so. And if they choose to switch within one year of the meter being installed we'll credit their account with any money they would have saved had they switched straight away.

Given the scale of the programme we won't be fitting meters for everyone straight away. You can find out more about the programme and when plan to work in your area by visiting our website at thameswater.co.uk/mymeter.

5. Extra care services

We all need a helping hand from time to time and we'll always do our very best to help you. We want to make sure you can easily access all our services and read the information we send you. So please let us know what you're experiencing and how we can help you.

Email ecs@thameswater.co.uk or call us on 0800 009 3652, 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and from 8am to 1pm on Saturdays.

This section tells you about how we can help if you:

- Have sight problems
- Are deaf or hard of hearing
- Use a dialysis machine at home
- Experience mobility concerns and can't carry anything heavy
- Have a friend or relative you want to contact us on your behalf
- Want to set up a password for when we call at your door
- Can't speak English very well.

5.1 I need help to read my bills and letters

Large print

If you find it difficult to read our bills, letters or leaflets we can send them to you in large print. When you ask for large print services all your future bills and letters will automatically be sent to you in a larger font size.

We'll also send you a magnifier card to make it easier for you to check a caller's identification card at the door.

Braille

When you let us know you use braille grade 1 or 2, we'll automatically send all your future bills and correspondence in braille. We're also happy to receive your letters in braille if this will help you.

We'll send you, free of charge, a braille notebook for writing notes in braille or for labelling food items in your cupboard, fridge or freezer.

Email bills for screen reading software users

If you use screen reading software on your computer, for example Jaws, let us know so we can email your bills and letters to you.

Talking bill service

If you let us know, we'll telephone you every time we have a new bill for you. We'll explain your new bill over the phone and help you arrange payment. We can also talk together about any other questions you have.

Leaflets on CD

If you have reading difficulties we can send any of our leaflets on CD. When we send leaflets to all our customers we'll automatically send it on CD to you. If there's a particular leaflet you would like to have let us know and we'll arrange a CD version just for you.

Coloured background bills

If you're dyslexic we can send your bills and correspondence on different coloured background paper. Just let us know what colour background you'd like.

5.2. I want to keep in touch but I'm deaf

Please let us know if you're deaf or hard of hearing and how you like to keep in touch. For example, do you use a textphone, text relay or a mobile phone for texting? If so, we can help you with our 24 hour textphone service and an emergency mobile number for receiving and sending texts.

24 hour textphone service

You can only use our textphone service if you actually use a textphone at home. You cannot connect to a textphone from a landline or mobile phone.

Your bill and account

| | |
|------------|---------------------|
| Text relay | 18001 0800 980 8800 |
| Textphone | 0800 316 6899 |
| Fax | 01793 424046 |

Water and wastewater services

| | |
|------------|---------------------|
| Text relay | 18001 0800 316 9800 |
| Textphone | 0800 316 9898 |
| Fax | 0118 373 7924 |

Emergency text messaging mobile phone service

If you have a water or wastewater emergency, for example, no water, a leak, or sewage flooding, you can text us on our emergency mobile number. We won't answer voice calls on this number, but we'll pick up texts and respond by text only.

Emergency text messaging service 24 hours a day on 07747 646779.

Please include your name, address and a brief description of the problem you're facing.

Sign language

If you use sign language and we need to visit you, or you let us know you're planning to visit our customer centre, we'll make sure a sign language interpreter is available.

You can choose to have a sign language interpreter for British (BSL) or European (SSE) sign language.

5.3 I use a dialysis machine at home

Let us know straight away if you, or a member of your household, use a dialysis machine at home. Call us on 0800 009 3652, 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and from 8am to 1pm on Saturdays. This line is not available on Sundays or bank holidays. If you have an emergency, call us on 0800 316 9800. Our lines are open 24 hours a day.

Once we know we'll give you a longer notification period before we turn off your water supply during planned work. During emergencies we'll also try to contact you to give you additional advice and support.

5.4 I can't move about easily or carry anything heavy

We aim to provide you with a reliable water supply 24 hours a day, every day. Occasionally there may be an interruption to your water supply. This may be because of a burst pipe or maintenance work we have to do.

If you have a mobility or sight problem and you need extra help to get bottled water or water from a tanker or standpipe, please let us know. We'll then include you on our special assistance register.

5.5 A relative or friend deals with my bills

You may decide to let a friend, relative or carer deal with all your bills and letters. Just let us know the name of the person you'd like to be your authorised representative along with their relationship to you.

We'll make sure this information is on your account so when your representative calls us we'll know that they already have your permission.

If you have power of attorney please send us a copy of your written authority. We'll then know we're dealing with the right person. You can do this by emailing a copy to ecs@thameswater.co.uk, or writing to us at:

Extra care services
Thames Water
Kembrey Park
Swindon
SN38 4TU

We want to be as helpful as possible but we need to safeguard your interests and privacy too.

5.6 Keep safe and secure when opening your door

When your doorbell goes, do you know who is calling? Keep safe, use your door chain and carefully check the caller's uniform and identity. If unsure don't open your door and don't let them in. Instead call us on 0800 009 3964 and ask us to check their identity.

Double check the caller's identity

On most occasions we'll have made an appointment with you already or you'll know a meter reader is calling because you have a water meter and it's inside your property. Always check the caller's identification card:

- Does the photograph match the person?
- Is the card out of date?
- Can you clearly see the company logo?

A genuine caller, including our contractors, will always be happy to confirm their name and what their visit is about. They'll also happily wait outside while you call us to confirm who they are.

Set up a doorstep password with us

Keep extra safe and set up a personal doorstep password by calling us on 0800 009 3652.

You can choose a password of no more than eight characters, which only you and our authorised caller will know.

When we call at your door, we'll automatically tell you your password, without being prompted, so you'll know they're genuine. If the caller doesn't know your doorstep password, refuse them entry and call us on 0800 009 3964. If you think you could be in danger don't hesitate to call the police and ask for help.

We're not the water board

If someone calls at your door and says they're from the water board, don't let them in. There hasn't been a water board for years.

5.7 I don't speak English very well

Don't worry, we can help you too, as we've a 24 hour telephone interpreter service. Just let us know your name, telephone number and language you use and we'll phone you back with a translator.

5.8 Getting in touch with our extra care team

You can visit www.thameswater.co.uk/extracare, where you can download our extra care services leaflet and find more information and advice.

By phone

Direct line: 0800 009 3652
Textphone: 0800 316 6899

Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm, or Saturday from 8am to 1pm.

By email

ecs@thameswater.co.uk

In writing

Thames Water
PO Box 286
Swindon
SN38 2RA

In person

Please let us know you're calling first so we can make sure we can help you when you arrive. For example, if you're coming by car we can reserve a disabled parking space for you. Or if you are deaf and use sign language we can make sure we have a sign language interpreter available.

Thames Water
Customer Centre
Kembrey Park
Swindon
Wiltshire
SN2 8BN

Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm.

Our customer guarantee scheme

If you write to us regarding the extra care services we provide we will respond to you as quickly as possible but in any case within five working days of receiving your contact. If we do not provide a substantive response to your request within five working days you will automatically receive a payment of £30. In most cases this payment will be made as a credit to your water services account.

See section 7 - Our guarantees to you, for more information. A copy of which can be found at www.thameswater.co.uk/ourcommitment.

6. Access to private property

Although many of our water pipes and sewers are located across public land, some are on private land. This means that occasionally we may need to get access to private land to repair pipes and sewers, or to lay new ones.

We may also need to come into your property to:

- Investigate a leak
- Repair your, or your neighbour's, water supply pipe
- Read your meter
- Fit a meter
- Test the quality of drinking water at your taps
- Check for faulty drainage connections
- Make sure water supply (water fittings) regulations are being met

If we need to access your property, in most cases we'll have made an appointment with you. Or you'll know we're on our way because you have told us you've got an emergency which we're going to help you with.

6.1 Keep safe and secure – set up a doorstep password

When our representative calls at your property, they will:

- Let you know they're calling on our behalf
- Tell you what they are going to do
- Show you their identification card
- Confirm your personal doorstep password, if you have one

Carefully check the caller's identification card to make sure they are genuine. If in doubt call us on 0800 009 3964 to confirm the caller has been sent by us.

For extra security and peace of mind call 0800 009 3652 to set up a personal doorstep password with us. See section 5.6 in the previous chapter.

6.2 Pipelaying powers on private land

If we need to access your property to repair, replace or lay new pipework, we'll contact you to:

- Let you know what needs to be done
- Confirm when we're going to do it
- Arrange a mutually convenient time to carry out the work

Wherever possible we'll give reasonable advance notice of the work we need to do and contact both the owner and occupier of the property to discuss what we need to do and how best to do the work. If we urgently need to carry out work because, for example, there's a leak, burst pipe or sewer collapse, we may not be able to give you much notice but we'll let you know as soon as we can.

Our code of practice Pipelaying powers on private land, sets out what we'll do to protect your property and ensure safety at all times. You can download a copy at www.thameswater.co.uk/literature.

7. Our guarantees to you

We want to give you the very best service possible, at all times. We try to keep our promises and make sure you're totally satisfied with what we do for you.

Our commitment is backed up by our customer guarantee scheme, which covers the following activities:

- Appointments
- Written billing queries
- Written queries about your water and wastewater services
- Responding to written complaints
- Written queries and requests about our extra care services
- Interrupting your water supply
- Low pressure
- Restrictions of use notices
- Flooding from sewers

Our customer guarantee scheme includes all of the standards set out in government regulations, along with some extra promises which we've decided to give you. If we fail to meet one of our guarantees, we'll say sorry, confirm what we're going to do to put it right, and give you a payment because we didn't keep our promise.

A summary of our guarantees is provided below. For a more detailed explanation, please read the leaflet *Our guarantees to you – customer guarantee scheme*. A copy of which can be found at www.thameswater.co.uk/ourcommitment).

7.1 Appointments

Whenever we need to meet you at your home or gain access to your property for non-emergency works, we'll agree an appointment with you. We'll let you know whether we're going to arrive before or after 1pm. If you request it, we'll also be able to give you a two hour time slot, but this may not be at the same time as the original morning or afternoon slots offered.

It will be very unlikely that we'll need to cancel your appointment, but if we do, or we need to reschedule it to a later date, we'll give you at least 24 hours' notice.

If we fail to do any of the above, or we don't arrive within the times we promise you, we'll automatically pay you £50.

7.2 Written billing queries

If you write to us about the accuracy of your bill or account details we'll send a substantive reply within ten working days. If we take longer than this, we'll automatically pay you £30.

If you ask us in writing to change the way you pay your bill, we'll make the change as quickly as possible. If we can't make the change you've requested, and we don't let you know within five working days, we'll automatically pay you £30.

7.3 Written queries about your water and wastewater services

If you write to us about the water or wastewater services we provide for your home or business premises, we'll either send our reply, or telephone you, within ten working days of receiving it. If we don't provide you with a substantive reply within ten working days we'll automatically pay you £30.

7.4 Responding to written complaints

If you complain in writing about our water and wastewater services, we'll either send you our reply or telephone you within ten working days of receiving it. If we don't provide you with a substantive reply within ten working days, we'll automatically pay you £30.

7.5 Written enquiries and requests about our special needs services

If you write to us about our special needs services, we'll reply to you or let you know whether you've been added to our special assistance register within five working days of your request. If we don't do this, we will automatically pay you £20.

7.6 Interrupting your water supply

Sometimes, we have to turn your water off to repair leaks, replace water pipes and mains, fit a water meter or connect new customers. If we plan to turn your water off for longer than four hours, we'll give you 48 hours advance notice and tell you when we're going to turn your water back on.

If you have no water because our water main bursts we'll get your water back on within 12 hours of knowing about the problem. If the burst is on one of our larger strategic mains, we'll get your water back on within 48 hours.

If we don't give you 48 hours advance notice of when we plan to turn your water supply off or if we have been unable to restore the supply within 12 or 48 hours (depending on the size/type of the burst main in question), we'll automatically pay you £30. For every extra complete 24 hour period you have no water we'll pay you an additional £10.

7.7 Low pressure

If the water pressure in our communication pipe - the pipe connecting your water supply pipe with our water main - falls below seven metres head, you may be eligible for a customer guarantee scheme payment of £30. To be eligible for this payment you must experience low pressure twice within a 28 day period for at least one hour on each occasion. Only one payment will be made in any financial year (1 April to 31 March).

If we know you have had two periods of low pressure, we'll make the payment automatically. Otherwise, you can submit a claim for the payment within three months of the date of the second period of low pressure.

This guarantee doesn't apply if the low pressure is caused by work we're doing on our water mains, for example repairing bursts and leaks, or because of drought.

7.8 Restriction of use notices

If we issue you with a restriction of use notice because of problems with the water we supply to you, we'll automatically pay you £30 each time we do this.

7.9 Flooding from sewers

Internal flooding

If our sewer overflows and wastewater gets into your building or beneath a suspended floor, we'll automatically make a payment to you. Our payment will equal your wastewater charges for the year in which the flooding occurs, subject to a minimum payment of £150 and a maximum of £1,000.

We'll make a payment to you each time you experience internal flooding from our sewers.

This guarantee doesn't apply if the flooding was caused by exceptional weather conditions.

If we make a payment under our customer guarantee scheme, it does not mean we have accepted liability for any damage or loss that you may have incurred.

External flooding

If our sewer overflows and wastewater gets onto your land but doesn't enter your home or buildings, you may be able to claim a payment. When you make a claim you'll need to show you have experienced actual loss, damage or serious loss of amenity. To make this easier for you we do have a specific form we can give you to help you describe the impact the flooding has had on you. If eligible, our payment will be equal to half your wastewater charges for the year in which the flooding occurs, subject to a minimum payment of £75 and a maximum of £500.

This guarantee doesn't apply if the flooding was caused by exceptional weather conditions or problems with your own pipework.

If we make a payment under our customer guarantee scheme it does not mean we have accepted liability for any damage or loss that you may have incurred.

Penalty Payments

For broken appointments, written complaints, billing enquiries, written questions about your water and wastewater services, and written enquiries about extra care services, we will make the payment to you within ten working days of us becoming aware of the failure in service.

In all other cases, except low water pressure, payment will be made within 20 working days of us becoming aware of the failure in service. If we do not make payment automatically a further penalty payment may also be due.

7.10 Making payment

In most cases, we'll make a payment automatically when we have failed to meet one of our guarantees. Payments are normally made in the form of a credit to your water services account you hold with us. If you're not directly billed by us for your water and wastewater services, or your charges are fully paid, we may send you a cheque.

We might not make a payment if there are circumstances beyond our reasonable control. For example, severe weather conditions, strikes or the action of third parties.

Payments made under this scheme do not affect any legal rights you may have to take action for any loss or damage you suffer. Entitlement to a payment under the Customer Guarantee Scheme doesn't mean we admit liability for the incident.

How do I make a claim?

We hope you'll never need to make a claim under our customer guarantee scheme. If you need to claim, you must do so within three months of the event. You can use our online form at www.thameswater.co.uk/ourcommitment, telephone us on 0800 316 9800, or write to us at:

Thames Water
Customer services (customer guarantee scheme)
PO Box 436
Swindon
SN38 1TU

If we can't agree about making a payment

Ofwat, our independent regulator, can consider your claim if you feel we have acted unfairly by denying a payment under our customer guarantee scheme. You can write to:

Ofwat
Centre City Tower
7 Hill Street
Birmingham B5 4UA
Tel: 0121 644 7500
Email: mailbox@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk

8. If you're unhappy with our service

We want to provide you with a first-rate customer service at all times. We appreciate, however, that sometimes we don't always get it right.

If you're unhappy, let us know straight away so we can discuss the situation with you and decide what we need to do.

our quality promise leaflet, explains the steps we both need to take to get your complaint reviewed. you can download a copy at www.thameswater.co.uk/literature, under codes of practice.

8.1 If you're unhappy, please let us know

Your bill or charges
0800 009 3669 (textphone 0800 316 6899)
Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm

Your water or wastewater services
0800 316 9800 (textphone 0800 316 9898)

Write to us

If you're unable to call us you can use our online form at www.thameswater.co.uk/contactus or write to:

Thames Water Utilities Ltd
PO Box 436
Swindon
SN38 1TU

Please include a contact telephone number and tell us the best time we can call you.

If you write to us we will respond to you as soon as possible, but in any event within ten working days.

Personal visit

If you want to visit us, please call us on the above numbers to let us know. We'll then make sure the right people are available to deal with your concerns. You can visit our customer centre, which is accessible to disabled customers, during normal opening hours Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm. Our address is:

Thames Water
Customer centre
Kembrey Park
Swindon
Wiltshire SN2 8BN

8.2 Liaising with staff and contractors

To help us deal effectively with your complaint we may have to pass some of your details to other members of staff, or contractors who work on our behalf, so your concerns can be fully resolved.

8.3 If you're not satisfied with our response

If you've written to us previously and remain unhappy with the way we've dealt with your complaint you can ask for it to be reviewed by our director of customer service.

8.4 If you're still unhappy

You can contact the Consumer Council for Water (CCWater) London and South East on 0845 758 1658 or 0207 931 8502. The address is:

1st Floor
Victoria Square House
Victoria Square
Birmingham
B2 4AJ
Email: londonandsoutheast@ccwater.org.uk

CCWater is an independent organisation which represents water and sewerage customers in England and Wales. Its services are free. CcWater may investigate your complaint and take it up with us on your behalf. Normally it will only do this if we've been given the opportunity to put things right first.

9. Arbitration

Disputes handled by Ofwat

In some cases CCWater will not be able to deal with your complaint. You or CCWater may refer certain disputes to Ofwat for them to decide. Either Thames Water or CCWater can provide more information about which disputes can be referred to Ofwat.

Water Redress Scheme

If your complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction, you may be eligible for a review under the Water Redress Scheme (WATRS). This is an independent adjudication service to resolve disputes between customers and water companies. The Scheme will address those complaints which remain unresolved at the end of the complaints process. It will be accessible when all efforts to resolve the complaint have failed, the parties concerned cannot agree upon an outcome and neither party is willing to change its position. If you have received a WATRS letter from CCWater and your complaint falls within the eligibility criteria for the scheme, you can make an application via WATRS website www.watrs.org or you can ask for an application form to be sent to you via info@watrs.org or by phoning 0207 520 3801. Guidance notes are available on the website or you can ask for a copy to be sent to you. Their address is WATRS, International Dispute Resolution Centre, 70 Fleet Street, London EC4Y 1EU.

10. Other leaflets available

We have a number of leaflets about many aspects of our service. These can be downloaded at www.thameswater.co.uk/literature:

- Beware of bogus callers - including information about our password scheme
- Bin it – don't block it
- Charges leaflets - metered and unmetered
- Our promises to you - customer guarantee scheme
- Extra care services
- How to get help if you can't pay your bill
- Our quality promise – information about our complaints procedure
- Water regulations summary - including information about byelaws
- When your water supply has a leak – code of practice for domestic customers
- WaterSure scheme
- WaterSure Plus

We also offer a comprehensive educational programme at www.thameswater.co.uk/waterinschools, which includes resources for students, teachers and customers. In addition, there is further advice and information for builders and developers in our developer services section.

11. Useful contacts

11.1 Contacting us

Online

www.thameswater.co.uk

You can contact us online to make a payment, tell us you're moving, provide a meter reading, send us an enquiry and much more.

Tweet us

We're on Twitter to help with any queries or problems you've got with your account or supply. Simply tweet us @thameswater.

By telephone

Your bill and account

For queries about your bill, change of address, meter readings and other billing queries, you can speak to our team on 0800 980 8800.

Opening hours:

Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm

Saturday, 8am to 1pm.

Textphone service if you're deaf and use a textphone: 0800 316 6899

Telephone self service

We have a wide range of self service options available 24 hours a day, including:

- Pay your bill with a debit or credit card
- Set up a Direct Debit or payment plan
- Check your balance

Water and wastewater services

For water and wastewater enquiries, emergencies and other non-billing enquiries you can call our team 24 hours a day on: 0800 316 9800

Textphone service if you're deaf and use a textphone: 0800 316 9898.

To contact us from abroad: +44 1793 366011

By post

Thames Water
PO Box 286
Swindon
SN38 2RA

So we can get back to you as quickly as possible, please include your name, address and telephone number.

Spotted a leak?

Let us know so we can get it fixed:

Online - visit www.thameswater.co.uk/leak

By Twitter - just send a tweet with the location to @thameswater or use #tweetaleak, 24 hours a day

By telephone - call our freephone Leakline 0800 714 614 (costs from mobiles may vary)

Developer services, new water supplies or new sewer connections

Call our team on 0800 009 3921, 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday. We're closed on weekends and bank holidays.

11.2 Access to your data

As a Thames Water customer we collect personal information about you. This is securely stored and protected by law. In accordance with Section 7 of the Data Protection Act 1998, you have the right to ask us to provide you with details of the personal information we hold about you by making a subject access request (SAR).

We can initially accept SAR requests either verbally or in writing. Although in both instances you will be asked to complete a simple SAR form to enable us to understand the information you require from our records. By return of post you will need to send us two forms of identification. These can be either a current utility bill or a bank statement, or even a recent Thames Water Bill. This is to verify you are the data subject and entitled to the information we hold on you.

To process your request there is a small administration fee of £10. Currently we only accept cheque payments, made payable to Thames Water Utilities Limited.

On receiving the completed SAR form, together with proof of identification and the administration fee, your request will be processed. You will receive an acknowledgement in writing that your request has been received. We will begin to compile the personal information you have asked us to provide. All SAR requests will be replied to within 40 calendar days.

Once your SAR has been completed we will return your personal information and your identification documents to you by first class recorded delivery.

To make a SAR request you can call our data protection team on 01793 476740, by e-mail at dataprotectionattw@thameswater.co.uk or in writing to the following address:

Data protection team (SAR)
Thames Water
PO Box 286
Swindon
SN38 2RA

11.3 Other organisations

CCWater (London and South East)

1st Floor
Victoria Square House
Victoria Square
Birmingham
B2 4AJ

Telephone: 0845 758 1658 or 0207 931 8502
Email: londonandsoutheast@ccwater.org.uk
www.ccwater.org.uk

Ofwat

Centre City Tower
7 Hill Street
Birmingham
B5 4UA

Telephone 0121 644 7500
Email: mailbox@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk
www.ofwat.gov.uk

Environment Agency

National Customer Contact Centre
PO Box 544
Rotherham
S60 1BY

Telephone 08708 506 506
www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Drinking Water Inspectorate

Area 7e
9 Millbank
c/o Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London
SW1P 3JR

Telephone 0300 068 6400
Email: dwi.enquiries@defra.gsi.gov.uk
www.dwi.gov.uk

Water Redress Scheme

International Dispute Resolution Centre
70 Fleet Street
London
EC4Y 1EU

Telephone 02075203801
Email: info@watrs.org

