



South Staffs Water

South Staffs Water Our Code of Practice for Household Customers 2025/26



March 2026

Our Code of Practice for Household Customers

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Our Code of Practice for Household

Customers Introduction

The Code

This Code of Practice is for household customers and gives information on the services we provide, the terms and conditions on which they are offered and how our customers can find the help and advice they need. It does not establish a contractual relationship between South Staffs Water Plc and any of its customers.

South Staffs Water

South Staffs Water provides clean drinking water to a population of 1.3 million customers through a network of 6000km of water mains. Almost half of our water is sourced from boreholes in the ground and the remainder from two major treatment works one of which takes water from the River Severn. We have excellent service standards, have very efficient operations and our bills to customers are amongst the lowest in the country. Our area of supply incorporates the Black Country conurbation and stretches up to Burton and Uttoxeter. We do not supply sewerage services; our customers receive these from Severn Trent Water Ltd.



We provide an essential public service to our customers, enabling them to go about their daily lives while also protecting the environment that they rely on and enjoy.

How we perform as a business is important to our customers and other stakeholders, including our regulators and our owners. Because we want to demonstrate that we are accountable for our performance, we have developed a number of outcomes for the business. These are the promises we have made to our customers on the services they want us to deliver.

To ensure we maintain our customers' trust in us, it is vital that we deliver these promises. So we have developed 30 performance commitments, which are the areas our customers have said they want to hold us to account. We have worked with customers to set targets for each of these commitments so they can measure our performance and see how we are doing.

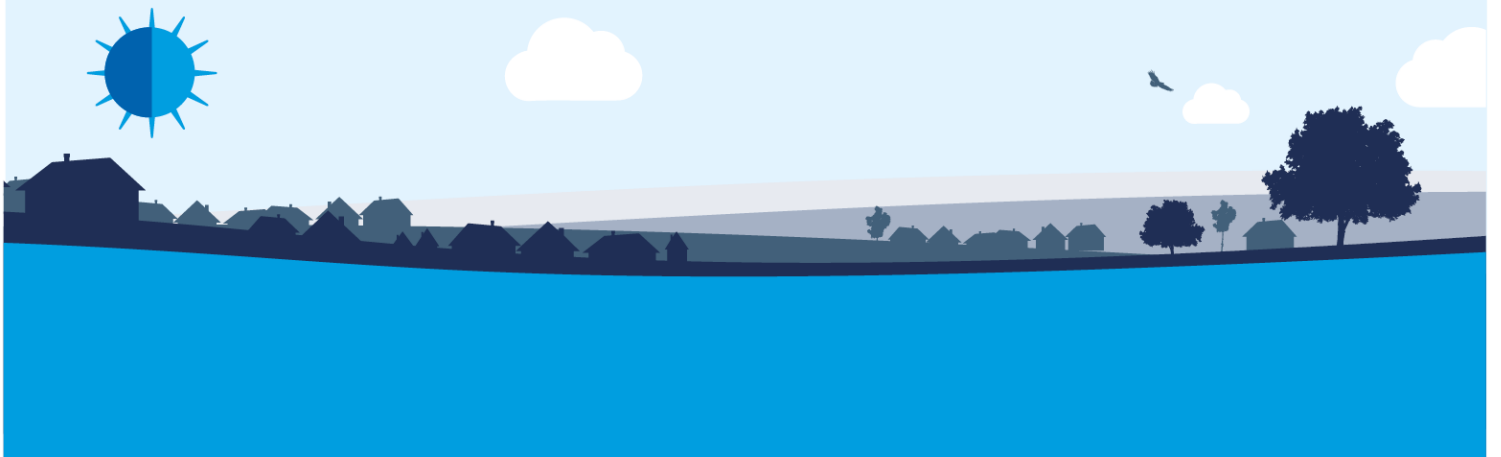


Further details of the measures that sit underneath these outcomes can be found on our website www.south-staffs-water.co.uk.

Throughout this Code there are references to useful information that can be found on our website.

If you do not have access to the internet, please call us for any information you require and we will be happy to help.

Section 1: The Regulatory Framework



Section 1

The Regulatory Framework

The Company ('We') operate under a Licence which was granted by the Secretary of State under the Water Industry Act 1991 for the provision of Water Services. The Act also establishes a strengthened framework of customer protection. Your individual statutory rights are maintained and strengthened under this Act; for example you can take civil action against us for any loss or damage sustained if we fail in our duty under the Act to supply water for domestic purposes.

We operate under the following Regulatory Framework

i) For each five year period Ofwat determines how much revenue water companies need to fund their services. Companies set annual charges based on these revenue allowances, plus inflation*. For more information please refer to our Charges Scheme on our website www.south-staffs-water.co.uk.

ii) The Secretary of State has laid down specific standards of drinking water quality with which we have to comply; assisted by the Drinking Water Inspectorate which monitors the quality of the water we supply and ensures that the legal standards are met. It is a criminal offence for a water company to supply water that is found to be unfit for human consumption and, as a consequence, the Secretary of State can authorise criminal proceedings to be instigated. The Secretary of State can also lay down other standards that we must meet when carrying out our basic water supply duties.

iv) The Environment Agency regulates us in our taking water from, and discharging effluent to, rivers and other inland waters.

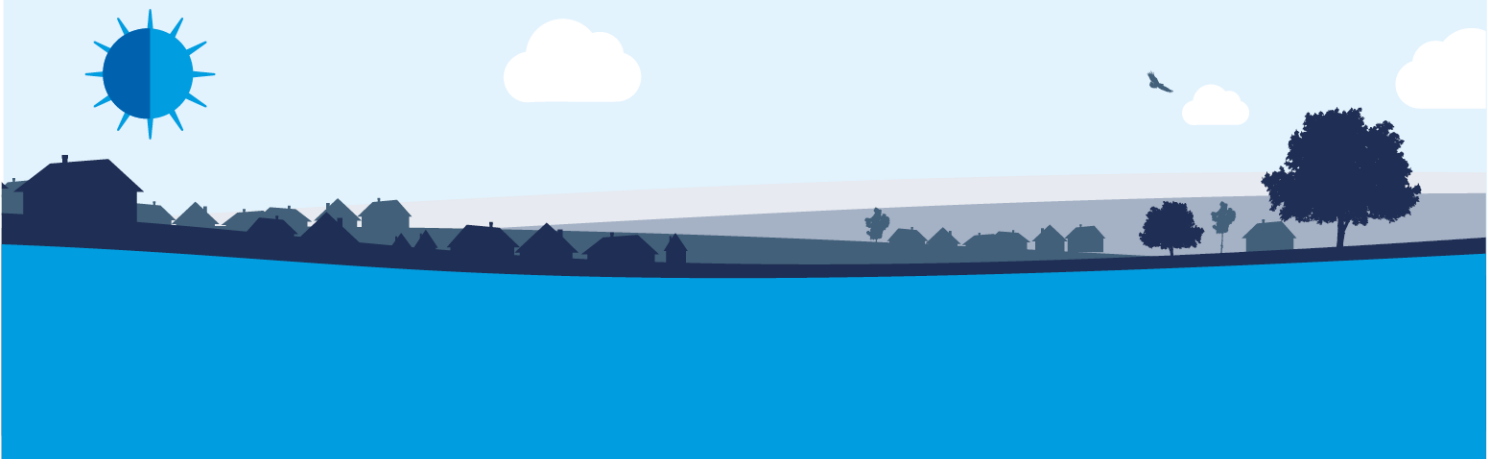
iii) Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) is the Government department responsible for environmental matters. Government Ministers bring forward statutes and regulations for the water sector through this department. Non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) work closely with Defra to help deliver their strategies. Key NDPBs for the water industry are the Environment Agency, the Drinking Water Inspectorate and Ofwat. These bodies are responsible to Government Ministers for all aspects of their organisation and performance and are accountable to Parliament through Ministers.

A list of useful telephone numbers and addresses can be found in section 13.

** The measure of inflation used is the Consumer Price Index with Housing costs (CPIH) in the November prior to the beginning of the charging year (April).*

We also work with the Consumer Council for Water (CCWater) which is the independent voice for all water consumers in England and Wales. For more information visit www.ccwater.org.uk.

Section 2:
The water services
we provide



Section 2

The water services we provide

2.1 Water quality

The Water Industry Act 1991 places duties on us to supply wholesome water for domestic purposes which conform to standards laid down in The Water Supply Regulations 2010. These Regulations are tougher than the EU's Water Quality Directive on which they are based.

These duties are enforceable by the Secretary of State and any contravention may render us liable to prosecution by him or the Chief Inspector of Drinking Water.

Our top priority is to provide high quality drinking water to our customers. Each year we complete around 80,000 tests on water samples taken from treatment works, reservoirs and at randomly selected homes across the region. We are required to maintain records of these tests for each water quality supply zone. A water quality supply zone is an area in which no more than 100,000 people live. Generally our water supply is described as 'moderately hard'. We appreciate that the water hardness can produce limited scale on water appliances. However, it is generally accepted that harder water does have beneficial health effects. For further information on water quality please visit www.south-staffs-water.co.uk

If you believe that your water has made you ill, contact us on 0800 389 10 11 straight away. We aim to be at the premises no later than four hours after receiving any complaint that indicates a threat to public health. If necessary we will arrange an alternative supply.

If at any time we believe that your water supply is unfit to drink we will tell you not to use the water or to boil it before you use it for drinking or cooking. We will do this as quickly as possible, via our website, by writing to you, or by whichever method allows us to broadcast the information as quickly as possible. We will also provide appropriate advice.

If we take a sample of water for analysis we will confirm the results to you by your chosen method of contact within 10 working days. In the event that you remain dissatisfied with the quality of your drinking water, independent advice may be obtained from your local Environmental Health Department. It is a general duty of Environmental Health Officers to keep themselves informed as to the wholesomeness and sufficiency of water supplied in the area for which they are responsible.

2.2 Quantity

We must provide you with enough water for normal domestic purposes such as drinking, washing, cooking, central heating and sanitation. The continuity of supply becomes more difficult to maintain when resources are scarce, such as during a drought, and when exceptional peak demands occur due to excessive garden watering. We are investing to improve our water sources and our distribution system so that we can keep restrictions to a minimum. However, peak hourly demands caused by garden watering are growing at a rate in excess of the general demand for water. This cannot be economically sustained.

Therefore customers who wish to use a sprinkler or other unattended watering device must have a meter fitted so that they are charged for the volume of water they use. Even so, restrictions, including hosepipe bans, on non-essential uses of water may occasionally be necessary. Our aim is that they should be imposed on average no more than once in 40 years.

If a supply for domestic purposes is interrupted or cut off as a result of emergency restrictions a payment can be claimed. There would be no entitlement if the circumstances were so exceptional that it would have been unreasonable for us to have avoided the interruption or cut off. In the unfortunate circumstances of this happening we will provide alternative sources, such as standpipes or water bowsers. In addition we will advise you when normal service has resumed.

Every five years all water companies are required to prepare long-term plans for managing the demand for water and supply of resources as part of business planning. This is a statutory requirement outlined in the Water Act 2003. The plans give a detailed assessment of how social, economic and political pressures may change the way water is used over the next 25 years and how factors, such as climate change and environmental pressures may change the amount of water that is available to meet that demand.

The most cost beneficial (including social and environmental costs and benefits) options are identified for meeting any shortfall between supply and demand including leakage reduction, metering, water efficiency and resource development. Leakage management, metering and water efficiency are all aspects of our normal operations and service.

2.3 Pressure

We must supply water for household purposes at a pressure which will ensure water reaches the top-most storey of every building within our supply area, unless the building is at such a height that water will not flow to it by gravitation from our supply reservoir or tank.

In practice, this means a pressure level of 10 metres at a flow of 9 litres per minute at the boundary stop tap - this equates to filling a 1 gallon container in just over half a minute. However, we will in most cases ensure higher pressure than this.

If you are affected by low pressure of less than seven metres static head on two occasions each lasting one hour or more in a period of 28 consecutive days you may claim a payment once in any year. See section 11.4 for more details.

Pressure and flow rates in your home can be affected by a number of factors:

- (i) Peak demand conditions;
- (ii) The height of the property above the water main and its height relevant to the supply reservoir or local booster pump etc;
- (iii) The condition of the supply pipe connecting your house to the boundary of your property;
- (iv) Whether the property shares a supply pipe with other properties.
- (v) Internal plumbing

Please note that (iii), (iv) and (v) are your responsibility. The cost of correcting such problems rests with you. However, in the case of (iv) responsibility will be shared with the owners of other properties.

If you think you have a problem with your mains water pressure please contact us on 0800 389 10 11. If we cannot resolve the issue on the phone we will arrange to visit you, free of charge to investigate the problem.

Issues with your water

The water quality section of our website contains information about issues that may affect your water supply. You can read these to help you identify the cause.

Your water should be clear, bright and of a consistent pressure.

If your water is discoloured, cloudy or has an unwanted taste or smell, or if you have experienced a loss of supply or poor pressure, you should contact us immediately on 0800 389 10 11. Please note that all the water we supply is disinfected with a small amount of chlorine to ensure it is completely safe to drink.

If we cannot deal with your query over the phone then we will arrange for a technician to visit your property and where necessary take water samples for analysis. If we take a sample of water for analysis we will confirm the results by telephone to you within ten working days.

If the water does not meet the drinking water quality standards we will notify you directly, either by phone, or by leaving a card through your door.

In exceptional circumstances where it is considered there may be a risk to health, we may ask you not to use the water, or to boil it before drinking. In these instances you will be provided with advice on what to do and if necessary, we will provide you with alternative water supplies.

If we have cause to believe the quality of the water supply may be compromised we have the statutory power to access your home where necessary.

Discoloured water

We ensure that, as far as is reasonably practicable, no water is supplied that causes loss or damage due to discolouration. It can occur when work is taking place in the area, for example repairs to a burst main or moving water to supply a different area. We advise you to run a cold tap in your property (preferably the kitchen tap) for 20-30 minutes or until the water runs clear, whichever is sooner. If your water does not return to a clear status or you are still concerned, please contact us on 0800 389 10 11.

Please note: If damage is caused as a result of the water supplied, you may be eligible for a payment under the terms of our Guaranteed Standards Scheme.

Independent advice

If you would prefer someone independent to reassure you about the quality of your drinking water, you can contact your Environmental Health Officer at your local council, who will be able to help and advise you.

2.4 Separation of supplies

If you are on a shared water supply pipe that feeds other properties you can apply to us to have a separate supply that will just feed your property. You will need to complete our Application Form for Separation or Replacement Water Connection which you can access from the Developer Services section of our website.

Upon completion of the required information we will provide you with the following :-

- A quotation for the cost of the work required to be undertaken by us to connect you.
- A copy of our mains records indicating approximately where we will lay our pipes to.

For us to be able to connect you to a separate supply you will need to lay a new pipe from your property to the boundary of the public highway. We will need to inspect your new pipe to make sure that it has been laid in accordance with the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999.

You will also need to make arrangements with your plumber to identify where you will need to disconnect your property from the existing shared supply when your new supply is connected by us. This disconnection is required to be done in accordance with the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999.

We will only make a connection when:-

- You have paid the quote
- The supply pipe has passed our inspection.

2.5 Replacement supplies

If you already have a separate supply but are replacing it because it is old or has started to leak you will need to complete our Application Form for Separation or Replacement Water Connection which you can access from the Developer Services section of our website.

For us to be able to connect to your new pipe you will need to lay a new pipe from your property to the boundary of the public highway. It will be your responsibility to ensure it is completed. We will then need to inspect your new pipe to make sure that it has been laid in accordance with the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999.

We will only make a connection when:-

- You have paid the quote
- The supply pipe has passed our inspection.

When we are undertaking the replacement of an existing supply we also need to arrange to disconnect the old supply that feeds your property at the water main. We expect to do this at the same time that we make the new connection. So, we will require you to lay your new supply to terminate at the boundary in line with the old supply.

If you intend to lay your new water supply in a different position to the existing one you must be aware that this will add extra cost to the job as it means we will have to make two separate excavations in the public highway which you will have to pay for.

Please look at the relevant information on the Developer Services section of our website or contact our Developer Services team who can advise you further.

2.6 Interruptions to supply

Our primary aim is to deliver to you a constant supply of high quality water. However, occasionally your supply may be interrupted, perhaps to carry out planned work or if there is a burst water main.

Planned work

There's some work we carry out which requires only short interruptions to your supply of less than 1

hour. You'll not normally receive written warning of these interruptions. If we believe the interruption will be over four hours, we'll provide at least 48 hours' notice and let you know what time the supply will be restored, if known.

If the supply is off for more than four hours, and we have failed to give at least 48 hours' notice, you may be eligible for a payment under the terms of our Guaranteed Standards Scheme.

Unplanned work

After an emergency or unplanned interruption, we'll take all reasonable steps to notify affected customers:

- That the supply has been interrupted or cut off
- Where alternative supplies can be obtained
- The time by which we plan to restore the supply
- A phone number to obtain further information

Restoration of supplies

If your water supply does get interrupted we are committed to restoring it as soon as possible. We'll restore supplies within 48 hours if the interruption to the supply was on a large, strategic main, or within 12 hours for smaller leaks or bursts.

If the incident is serious you can keep track of updates and find out about alternative water supplies by visiting our website or checking local media.

If you would like to report an emergency or a burst main please contact us on 0800 389 1011.

Emergency water supply

Sometimes we may need to turn your water off, or we may have an incident caused by a burst main. If you have a medical condition, which needs a constant supply of water, such as a kidney patient on home dialysis, we will do our best to get water to you.

If you have children under 5 years of age at the address, or if you have physical or medical conditions that would make it difficult obtaining alternative water supplies, please register your details so we can identify you in these incidences as we may be able to deliver bottled water directly to you.

To give you the best possible service we keep a confidential register of customers who have individual needs. The register means our staff know how best to assist you. If you would like to register for our Priority Services Register please call us on 0345 60 70 456 or visit our website www.south-staffs-water.co.uk/psr

2.7 Discoloured water

We ensure that, as far as is reasonably practicable, no water is supplied that causes loss or damage due to discolouration. Discolouration can occur when work is taking place in the area, for example repairs to a burst main or moving water to supply a different area. We advise you to run a cold tap in your property (preferably the kitchen tap) for 20-30 minutes or until the water runs clear, whichever is sooner. If your water does not return to a clear status or you are still concerned,

please contact us on 0800 389 10 11.

Please note: If damage is caused as a result of the water supplied, you may be eligible for a payment under the terms of our Customer Promise.

2.8 Water efficiency

There are many easy ways to save water in the home. Our handy tips will have you saving water, and money, in no time. Visit our website for more information and to claim your free water saving devices

www.south-staffs-water.co.uk/save-water



- 1 Take a shower instead of a bath
- 2 Install a 'save-a-flush' device if you have a single flush toilet
- 3 Only run your washing machine and dishwasher with a full load
- 4 Turn off the tap while brushing your teeth

2.9 Water Regulations

The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 are national requirements for the design, installation, composition and maintenance of water fittings and water-using appliances.

These regulations are designed to protect consumers and the environment from poor water quality, unnecessary waste, misuse and the contamination of wholesome water supplies.

All water systems must comply with the regulations and they should be referred to when carrying out plumbing works.

We are responsible for inspecting water systems to ensure they comply with the water fittings regulations and, if necessary, will use legal powers of entry to inspect for breaches.

Where do they apply?

Since 1999, all plumbing systems, water fittings and equipment supplied, or to be supplied, with water from the public water supply are covered under these regulations in England and Wales. This applies to plumbing systems in all types of premises. A plumbing system includes the premise's underground supply pipe from the point connecting it to the water main, to where the water is drawn off for use.

They also apply to plumbing systems that use a private water supply and have a mains backup provided by us.

Where do they not apply?

They do not apply where a property uses a private water supply and does not have a supply of water from us. However, it is good plumbing practice to follow the requirements of the regulations.

Who has to comply?

Owners and occupiers of premises and anyone who installs plumbing systems or water fittings have the legal duty to ensure that the systems satisfy the regulations.

In most cases, advanced notice must be given for proposed installations, so architects, building developers and plumbers have to follow the regulations on behalf of future owners or occupiers.

How can I ensure the plumbing work at my property meets these standards?

While many simple plumbing jobs can be safely tackled by someone with competent DIY skills, more complex tasks should be completed by a professionally qualified plumber.

We always recommend that a registered plumber is used for repairs to internal or external leaks or a registered groundworker who does repairs to external leaks only.

To find a plumber or groundworker you can visit www.wras.org.uk, enter your postcode or visit www.watersafe.org.uk. A WaterSafe recognised plumber is a qualified professional plumber who is a member of one or more Approved Contractors' Schemes. Approved plumbers or groundworkers will also have public liability insurance cover. Each of the schemes is either operated by a water company or appointed by the Secretary of State.

We, along with the majority of water companies, subscribe to the Water Industry Approved Plumber Scheme (WIAPS). This scheme is run by the Water Regulations Advisory Service (WRAS) on behalf of water companies.

You can also visit our website, www.south-staffs-water.co.uk or contact us on 01922 638282 and ask to speak to a member of the Water Regulations team.

Whether you decide to appoint an approved plumber, or undertake DIY, it is advisable to use only materials that have been approved to be in contact with drinking water.

WRAS check and endorse product compliance to ensure that they do not affect drinking water quality. These products carry the WRAS logo.



Who is responsible for enforcing the regulations?

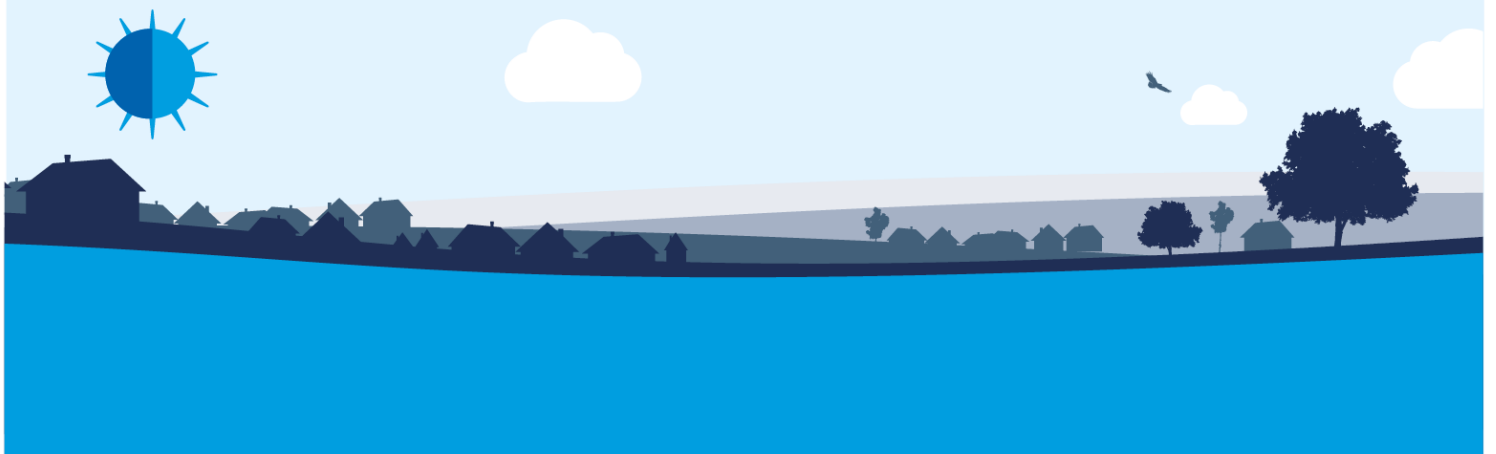
The regulator is the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. View the Defra website for more details.

The Government requires water suppliers to enforce the regulations within their area of supply. We may undertake inspections of new and existing installations to check that the regulations are being met.

Where breaches of the regulations are found, we'll require them to be remedied as soon as practicable. Where breaches pose a risk to health, the water supply to the premises may be disconnected immediately to protect the health of occupants or others fed from the same public supply. It is a criminal offence to breach the regulations and offenders may face prosecution and a fine of up to £1,000 per offence.

Should you require independent advice please contact the Drinking Water Inspectorate or the Health Protection Agency. It is a criminal offence to breach the Regulations and offenders may face prosecution.

Section 3:
Water pipes -
responsibility for pipes



Section 3

Water pipes - responsibility for pipes

3.1 Responsibility of pipes

This example diagram shows who is typically responsible for pipework. It distinguishes between customer or property owner responsibility and the pipework that we're responsible for.



* Homeowners are usually responsible for the water supply pipe up to the property boundary.

Service pipe

The service pipe connects our water main to the property. The service pipe has two parts – communication pipe and supply pipe.

Communication pipe

The communication pipe runs from our water main to the boundary of your property (usually the back of the public footpath). We're responsible for repair, maintenance and replacement of this section of pipe.

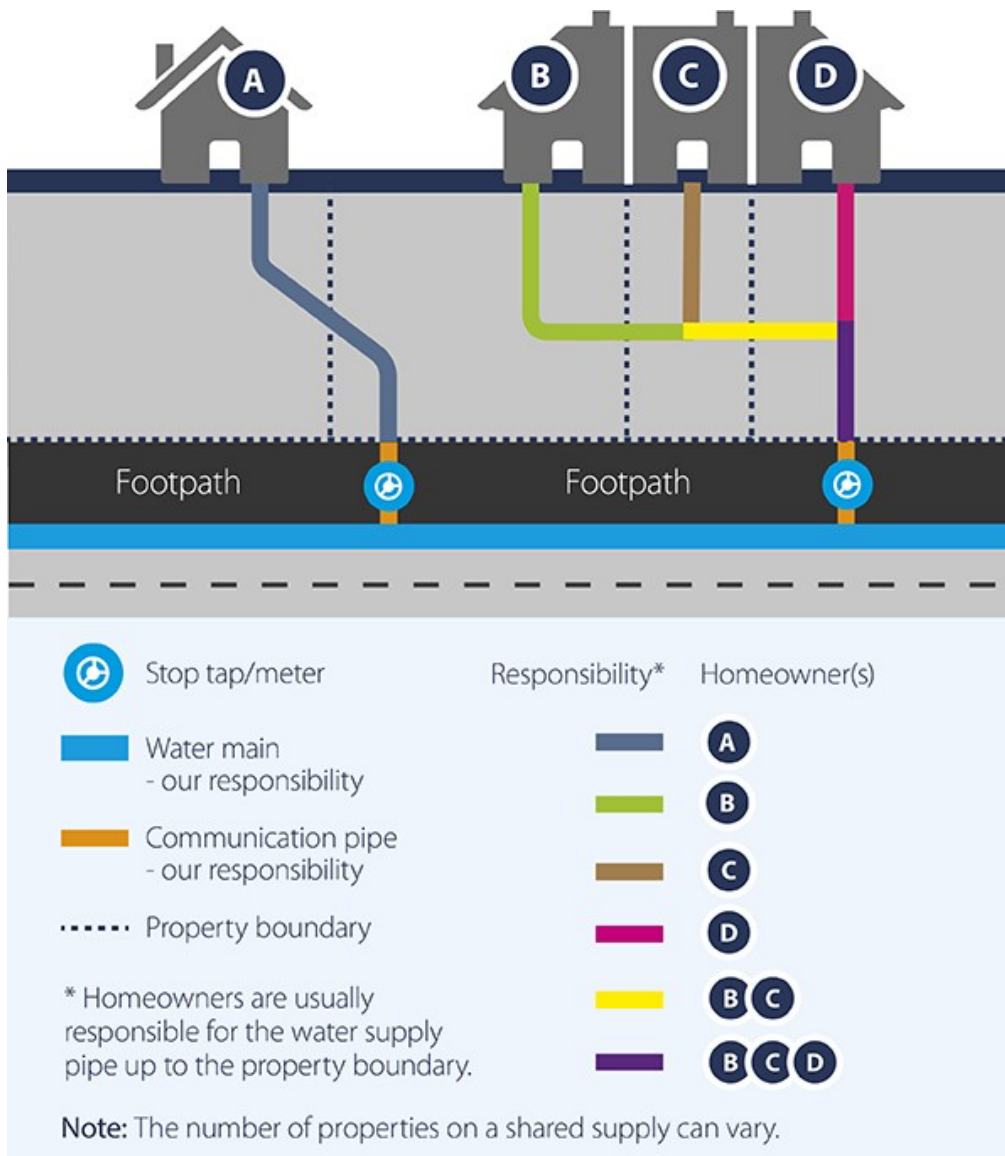
Supply pipe

The supply pipe can be laid in the highway, on the property owner's land, or land owned by someone else. If it serves more than one property it's the responsibility of all property owners. Under most circumstances it runs from the boundary to your property. The owner of the property is responsible for its repair, maintenance and replacement.

Customers or property owners are responsible for pipework and fittings inside the property as well as the supply pipe described above. We are responsible for maintaining and repairing any pipework on the other side of the boundary.

Shared pipework responsibility

It's often the case, particularly with older properties either semi-detached or terraced that several neighbours share a water supply pipe rather than each having their own. This diagram shows a typical shared supply pipe arrangement and explains how responsibility is split between each of the properties.



If the pipe is in poor condition, we recommend you and your neighbours replace it with separate pipes. This would improve both the flow and the pressure of water at your tap. We can require separation of a shared pipe in certain circumstances:

- (i) If the houses are converted into a number of flats or homes;
- (ii) If the shared pipe has been interfered with.

Any dispute arising about the requirement for separate service pipes may be referred to Ofwat for determination.

3.2 Lead

Lead is a common substance. It can come from a variety of sources, including vehicle exhausts, and old paintwork, and may be present in air, food, soil or water.

How does lead get into drinking water?

Water leaving our treatment works and travelling along our network of pipes is effectively lead-free. Where lead is found in tap water it usually comes from old lead pipework between the water main and the premises and in some cases lead solder in or near the home.

For a long time, generally up to the 1960s, lead was used for some water pipes and in solder used to join copper pipes and fittings.

Some types of water, particularly soft water, can dissolve lead from pipes. However, the water we supply is hard and as such is less prone to dissolution.

The amount of lead dissolved from pipes also depends on acidity, temperature and the standing time of the water.

Is lead harmful?

Excessive exposure to lead can be harmful to humans. Young children, and unborn babies are particularly vulnerable and studies have shown lead may have some effect on their mental development. It may also be a factor in behavioural problems.

To ensure the water is safe to drink South Staffs Water treats its water to reduce the extent to which lead dissolves from lead pipework.

How do I know if there are lead pipes in my home?

If your home was built:

- Before 1963 it may have lead pipes
- After 1963 it is unlikely to have lead pipes

If your home has been modernised since the early 1960s and all of its pipework replaced, there should be no lead pipework on your property.

If you are unsure, you can make a simple check:

- Look at the pipework inside your home, such as the pipes leading to the kitchen tap or the pipe which leads to your internal stop tap (usually under the kitchen sink)
- Unpainted lead pipes are dull grey and soft. If you scrape the surface gently with a knife or coin you will see the shiny, silver-coloured metal beneath

As a guide other pipe materials have the following appearances:

- Copper - bright or dull orange in colour and hard
- Iron - dark, very hard and may be rusty
- Plastic - may be grey, blue or black
- To identify whether you have lead pipes supplying your property open the stop tap chamber outside your property and examine the pipe which leads from the stop tap back to your property to see if it has the lead appearance described above.

The pipe from the boundary of your property to the internal plumbing is the owners' responsibility along with all of the internal plumbing.

If you have any lead pipework between the stop tap outside your home and your kitchen tap, the best solution is to replace it with copper or plastic pipework.

How can I find out if there is lead in my drinking water?

If your home does have lead pipes, your drinking water may sometimes contain high levels of lead. If you are concerned about the level of lead in your supply please contact South Staffs Water. We will send a technician, free of charge, to determine the material your supply pipe is made from and take a water sample for analysis if appropriate. The results will be sent to you after the analysis.

More than 99% of the samples we test every year pass the lead compliance standard.

What can I do to reduce lead levels?

If you believe lead pipes are causing high lead levels in your drinking water there are some simple short-term precautions you can take:

- Do not drink water that has been standing in pipes for long periods, for example, overnight, or if the supply has not been used for several hours.
- In these circumstances draw off a washing-up bowl of water from the kitchen tap to clear the water that has been standing in the pipes. This need not be wasted but can be used in the garden or for something other than drinking or cooking. You can now use water from the kitchen tap as usual.
- Ensure you only use cold water for cooking or drinking purposes, as hot water dissolves more lead than cold water.

Can South Staffs Water help?

At South Staffs Water we are committed to continuously improving the quality of the water supplied to our customers. To help reduce lead in the water we are able to offer the following water quality initiative.

We will replace free of charge the communication pipe if:

- A sample that exceeds the permitted maximum concentration of 5ug/l for lead (post a two minute flush).

For more information please call us on 0800 389 10 11.

Grants may be available for renovation and minor works for households with low income. For further information contact your local authority.

Where can I get more advice?

If you would like further information about lead in the water supply, please contact us and we will be happy to help you. Your Environmental Health Officer can also give advice.

Approved plumbers registered with WaterSafe www.watersafe.org.uk can assist with pipe replacement. If you would like details of a suitable plumber, please visit our website.

The Drinking Water Inspectorate has also published an information leaflet on lead which you can access on its website www.dwi.gov.uk.

3.3 Electrical earthing

Safe earthing of electrical appliances in your house is your responsibility. It is not one of our services. Your water service pipe should not be used for earthing your household electrical installation. Many houses (particularly those built before 1966) still rely on their water pipe as an earth. If your house is one of these, please remember that the increasing use of non-metal water pipes and mains reduces the effectiveness of your water pipe as an earth. You should consult your local electricity company or a qualified electrician for advice on electrical earthing. The use of water pipes as an earth is illegal and highly dangerous.

3.4 Leakage

We take the management of water leakage from our underground pipe network and from that of our customers' own supply pipes very seriously. Water is a precious resource and we should all use it wisely.

Our leakage targets are set primarily by Ofwat, the economic regulator, with the overall aim to reduce leakage by 50% by 2050 across England and Wales. Historically targets were based on the Sustainable Economic Level of Leakage (SELL)—where cost of fixing leaks equals the cost of water— however targets now prioritise high-level reductions in leakage to help secure our water supplies into the future, focusing on environmental impact and customer pressure.

The management of leakage is one of our top objectives. This covers a number of areas, including:

- Repairing the visible leaks reported to us
- Monitoring of the pipe network to detect any increase in leakage
- Locating and repairing the hidden, sub-surface leaks which don't show at ground level
- Replacing parts of our pipe network to minimise bursts and leakage
- Installing automated equipment to control network pressures

You too can help in this process. If you see a leak in our area of supply please report it to us using the leak report form on our web-site www.south-staffs-water.co.uk or by calling us free on 0800 389 10 11.

We can't eliminate leakage completely. Like most other things our underground pipe network wears out and suffers damage from the external environment. For example, from ground movement associated with freezing or very dry weather, not all of which will appear at ground level. It is our responsibility to find and repair these leaks and replace those parts of the network that are worn out. This takes time so there will always be a certain amount of leakage.

To help us achieve our objective, if you see a leak please report it. However, if the area around the leak has been sprayed with blue paint then it is likely that we have already visited this and identified the leak. If so, we will be making the necessary arrangements to have this leak repaired. Sometimes this can take longer than expected due to special working requirements, particularly from the local highway authority. However, if you have any doubt please report the leak – its better it's reported twice than missed altogether.

Where a meter is installed externally it will record any leakage from the private underground supply pipe between the meter and the property. If you have a meter, you pay for the water you use, so if water is running to waste, you will be paying for this and you may receive a large bill. We may give you an allowance to compensate for the lost water if the leak is repaired within our specified timescales.

When a meter is fitted as part of our service, we'll check for any leaks that may be present on your supply pipe free of charge. If we do find a leak, it's your responsibility to ensure it's repaired. If we find we can repair it without doing any more digging, we'll fix it at our cost whilst we're there. If further digging is needed, you may have to pay for the work. We'll explain your options and how we can assist you. If you're responsible for fixing the leak and it's not done, we're entitled to charge you for any subsequent loss of water.

Modern toilets installed after 2001 often have an internal overflow that maybe running without you realising that there is a problem. If the water is continually running down the back of the toilet pan this indicates a leaking overflow in the toilet cistern. This is not normal and needs attention to correct the fault with the float valve. A toilet overflow discharging constantly could be the equivalent to leaving a tap running all day and night. This could be wasting a lot of water and would quickly start to show an impact on your normal water usage.

The table below shows how much water could be wasted by a single toilet overflowing constantly. The volumes are shown in litres and cubic metres (m³).

Internal overflow constantly running	Volume of water being wasted		
	Flow rate 4 litres /min	How many baths would this equal?	How many 2 litre bottles of water?
1 hour	240 litres (0.24 m ³)	3	120
1 day	5,760 litres (5.76 m ³)	72	2,880
1 week	40,320 litres (40.32m ³)	504	20,160

If you think you have a problem with your toilet cistern and can't fix it yourself you should contact an approved plumber registered with WaterSafe www.watersafe.org.uk who will be able to resolve the problem for you.

Leaks that happen on the supply pipe from the boundary to your property, all stop taps located either in your garden or inside your house and all the plumbing inside the house are your responsibility to repair. To stop water running to waste we have a legal right that requires you to repair any leaks or faults on the supply pipe or defective fittings.

Using your water meter to check for leaks

Water charges are based on per cubic metre of water used. On your meter the black numbers indicate the cubic metres used and the red numbers indicate the fractions of cubic metres. To check for any leaks on pipework after the meter:

- Turn off all taps and ensure no appliances etc. that need water are in use e.g. dishwashers, toilets, washing machines
- Read the meter (including the red digits)
- Don't use any water for at least an hour after taking the reading
- Read the meter again
- If the second reading is higher than the first there may be a leak. Call us on 0800 389 1011, we'll give you some advice and if needed we'll send a technician to help further

Assisted leak repair service - we want to help

As previously described, legally the supply pipe is your responsibility to repair – however, we want to help out where we can. We advise you to contact us immediately when you've noticed a leak on your property and we can advise you further. You can do so by filling out a report a leak form on our website www.south-staffs-water.co.uk or call us on 0800 243 352.

Metered properties

- Any water that leaks from your supply pipe is recorded through your meter, so you'll be billed for it
- We may consider granting an allowance to cover the cost of the extra water that's been lost, as long as the work to repair the leak is done within 30 days
- The allowance is based on refunding the cost of the additional water that has been measured through the meter due to the leak, compared to past consumption
- Where there's no record of past consumption, the adjustment is based on typical usage for a property of a similar type. It may be possible to adjust this again if your subsequent actual usage is significantly different
- The leakage allowance is usually applied to one billing period only. If the excess water didn't drain into a public sewer, we'll grant a 100% allowance on excess sewerage charges for the same period
- To qualify, you must submit your claim within 12 months of any work being done
- You'll be advised of any adjustment within 10 working days of us receiving a claim
- If work to repair the leak is delayed we'll reduce the allowance to a maximum of 50%. We won't make any adjustment where the leak has been caused through negligence of the customer/property owner
- We won't be responsible for any loss, damage or any associated costs or expenses resulting from any escaped water from the supply pipe or fittings at the property.

- Whether you're a Cambridge Water customer or a South Staffs Water customer please visit www.cambridge-water.co.uk to request a claim form

3.5 Power of Entry

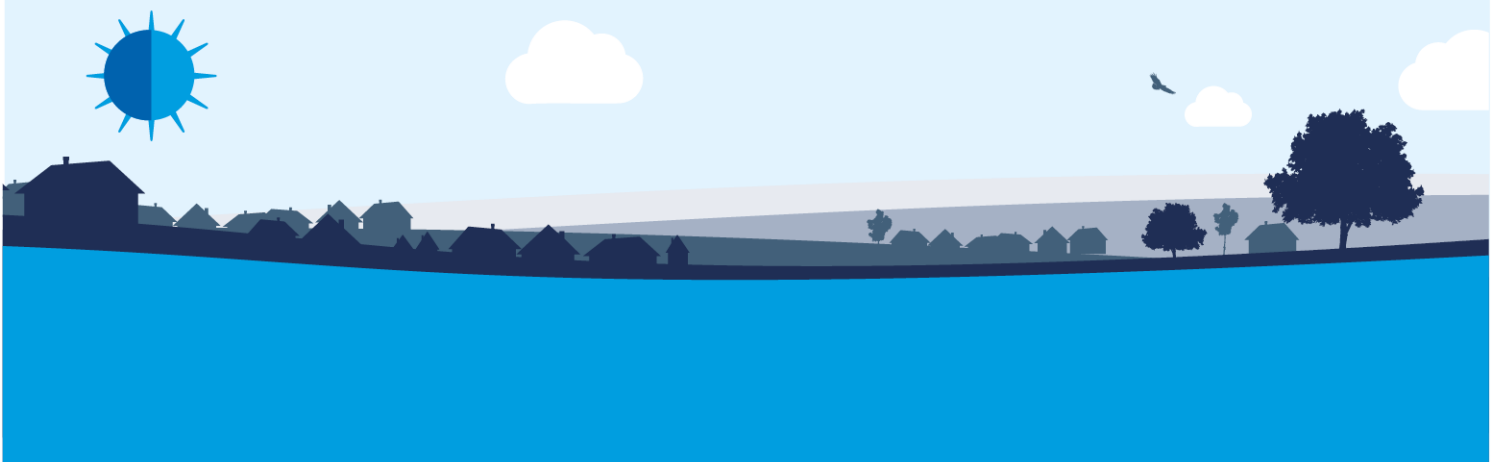
Powers of Entry for Breach of Regulations inspection are covered under Section 159, 162 and 170 of the Water Industry Act 1991. Except in an emergency where we have a right to enter if we:

1. Give you 24 hours' notice of an inspection to ascertain whether waste or misuse of water is or has been taking place or of a visit to take a water quality sample
2. Give you seven days' notice in all other cases.

If we have not given you this notice you have the right to refuse entry unless it is an emergency and our representative does not produce an authenticated document showing this authority.

Section 4:

Water charges and bills



Section 4

Water charges and bills

We produce an annual Statement of Water Charges and Charges Scheme, which is available on our website – www.south-staffs-water.co.uk alternatively you can call 0345 60 70 456 and request a copy. This details our policy on charging together with the scale of charges payable within the year. Also included are the charges that we collect on behalf of Severn Trent Water for sewerage services.

Normally the occupier of the property is responsible for paying water charges. However, if you pay your water charges to a landlord you must ensure s/he writes to us confirming the arrangement. Once we have received this written communication we will send your future water bills direct to your landlord.

If you have a query about your water charges please contact us on 0345 60 70 456. If you think you do not owe the amount you are being asked to pay, you must let us know why. We will then investigate matters and make sure your bill is corrected if necessary.

4.1 Unmetered water charges

The charge for an unmetered property is calculated by multiplying the rate poundage for the year by the rateable value of the property as fixed at 31st March 1990. A bill for the total annual amount payable will usually be sent to customers in March of each year. The annual charge is due and payable 12 months in advance on 1st April. Customers can pay in any one of the following ways:

- (i) The annual amount in one payment on or before 1st April, or
- (ii) In two equal instalments, payable on 1st April and 1st October, or
- (iii) By any one of a number of payment options. See section 7 for more information

4.2 Metered water charges

The charge for a metered water supply to a property comprises two elements:

- (i) A standing charge that varies with the size of your supply pipe and covers the extra costs not incurred with an unmetered water supply. These costs include reading, maintaining and replacing defective meters
- (ii) A consumption charge calculated by multiplying the volume of water used by the rate per cubic metre for the year

Customers will usually receive two bills a year. Where we don't have an actual reading, bills will be based on an estimate. We aim to read meters at least once a year.

If you would like to submit an up to date reading, you can do this by visiting our website: www.south-staffs-water.co.uk – you'll need to register for My Account which then gives you around the clock access to your water account. Or call us with your reading on 0345 60 70 456. Payment is due on receipt of the bill, however we do offer other payment options which are described in section 7.

4.3 Surface water rebate

Your water service bill may also include a charge for surface water drainage. This is for the removal of surface water from your property that drains to the public sewer.

The charge is based on the property type. Alternatively you may receive a separate bill for surface water drainage based on the rateable value of your property. The charge is calculated by applying a "rate per pound" to your property's rateable value. The "rate per pound" is set by Severn Trent Water Ltd, as your sewerage service provider. It may benefit you to change your surface drainage water charge to a flat rate, based on the type of property. If you choose to change, the charge will be included in your water bill. Call us on 0345 60 70 456 for more information.

If you can show that none of your property's surface water drains to the public sewer, you may be able to have this charge reduced. Simply complete an application form and send an accurate plan of your property on a scale big enough to show, amongst other details - roads, the property's boundary and the way surface water drains from the property. The application form is available on our website: www.south-staffs-water.co.uk/surface-water-drainage or you call us on 0345 60 70 456.

4.4 Moving house

It is a legal requirement that customers should provide at least two days' notice of the vacation of a property. Once you know your move out day you can notify us online through our moving home section of your website: <https://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk/household/moving-home> or call us on 0345 60 70 456.

If you pay by a water meter, you'll need to contact us via our moving home webform or call us with the following information:

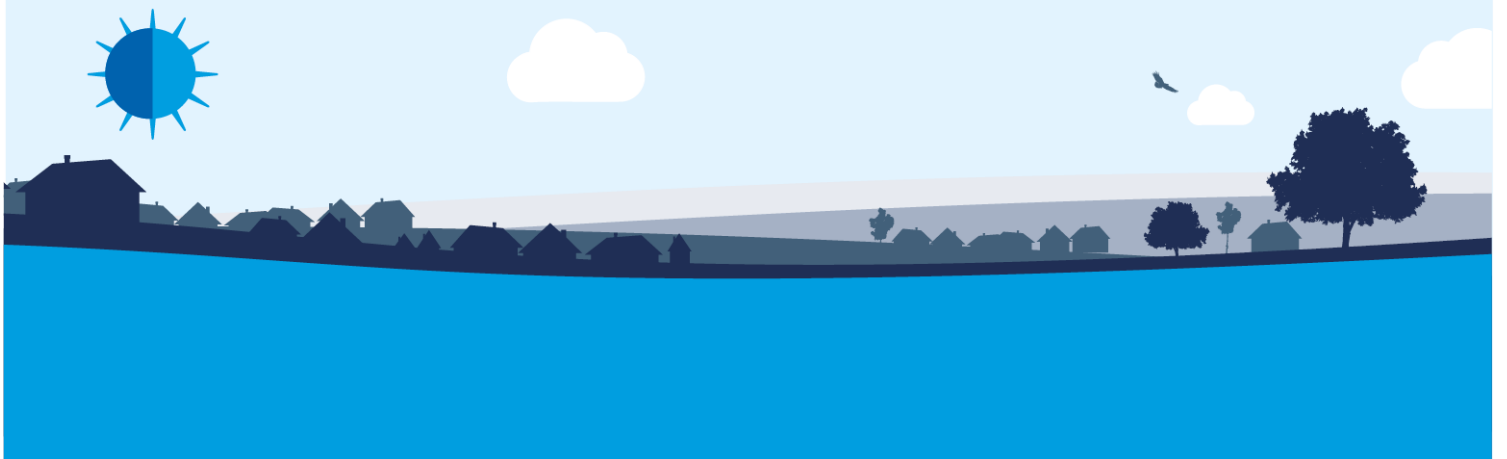
- (i.) Your meter reading
- (ii.) Your forwarding address
- (iii.) The name of the new occupier if you know it

If you're unable to take a meter reading and you need us to take a reading for you, you'll need to contact us prior to your vacation date for us to take an accurate reading. If you require us to do so, please contact us 0345 60 70 456.

Customers who do not have a water meter and are moving house should notify us of the date on which they are intending to move before they do so. If there has been a complete change of occupation at a household and no unmetered charges have been demanded from the new occupier we may install a meter and charge that property on a metered consumption basis.

When you notify us that you are moving house and your water service charges account is in credit we will issue you a refund within 10 working days of the request.

Section 5: Payment of bills



Section 5

Payment of bills

5.1 Ways to pay

We offer a range of flexible ways for customers to pay their water bill. For confirmation, none of our payment methods include any additional charges but some may take longer than others to process and clear. These are summarised below:

Locations for payments (free of charge unless stated)	Payment Options					
	Direct Debit	Cheque	Postal Order	Cash	Debit / Credit Card	DWP Direct Payments
Pay Now (Online Service)					•	
Mobile App	•				•	
MyAccount (online service)					•	
PayPoint				•		
South Staffs Water (online & telephone)					•	
South Staffs Water (postal)		•	•			
Water Direct via DWP						•

Pay Now

You can make quick payments without logging in to your MyAccount this can be done through our website: <https://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk/my-account/website-payment>

MyAccount or mobile app

You can pay your bill via our mobile app which is downloadable on any android or ios device or through MyAccount. Not only can you pay your bill through our app or online, you can also set up a direct debit, view your payment plans, upload your meter readings and access everything you need for your water account services.



Debit and credit card payments

We can accept debit and credit card payments over the telephone by all us on 0345 60 70 456. All debit and credit card payments will be processed free of charge. Please note we do not accept American Express.

Direct Debit

You can pay your water bill by Direct Debit if you hold a bank account or certain building society accounts. A range of payment dates are available to suit you. A Direct Debit can be set up online through MyAccount or by calling us on 0345 60 70 456. This service is free of charge. If you receive a refund that you are not entitled to you must pay it back when we request it.

Payments can be taken when your bill is due. If there is a change to the amount, date or frequency of the payment we will send notification 10 working days before we take the payment. If one of these dates is a bank holiday, or falls over a weekend, we will take payment on the next working day.

Internet or phone banking

You can pay your bill by bank transfer using your internet or phone banking, payable to South Staffs Water.

Our bank details are:

Company: South Staffs Water

Customer reference number: XXXXXXXXXXXX (10 digits which can be found on any letter or bill we've sent you)

Account number: 40770132

Sort code: 40-11-18

Your customer reference number can be found on the front of your bill. Please note the payment can take up to 5 working days to clear. Your bank may charge you for this.

By post

Send your cheque or postal order with the completed payment slip (no receipt will be issued). The address to send your payment to is:

South Staffs Water
P.O. Box 7040
Green Lane
Walsall
WS1 9QG

Make cheques payable to South Staffs Water and write your name, address and customer reference number on the back of the cheque. Please do not send post-dated cheques. Please do not send cash through the post - we do not accept any responsibility for cash sent by post. This service is free of charge.

At any PayPoint outlet

Some payment mechanisms may support payment via PayPoint you will receive a printed receipt as proof of payment, which should detail your customer reference number. This service is free of charge. The minimum PayPoint payment is £2 and must be made in cash.

Please see our website for further information: www.south-staffs-water.co.uk/household/my-bills-and-payments/paying-my-bill/paypoint

5.2 Help with Paying

Water and wastewater services have to be paid for, but we know that finding the money can be difficult sometimes.

If you're having difficulties paying your water bill, or if you think that you may experience difficulties paying your bill in future, please contact us straight away on 0800 09 30 610 so that we can help.

What happens if I contact you about payment issues?

There are lots of options available and our trained advisors can work with you to help identify the best solution for your needs. We can do this by:

- Advising you how to reduce your water consumption
- Offering flexible payment options
- Seeing if you are eligible for special tariffs
- Notifying you of organisations that offer independent advice

Flexible payment options

Bills can be paid annually, monthly or more frequently by prior arrangement. If you have a particular problem getting the money to us we will try to find an arrangement that suits you.

If you are a metered household customer you may be eligible for WaterSure.

Water Direct

Customers in receipt of income-based Jobseekers' Allowance, Income Support, Income- Related Employment and Support Allowance or Pension Credit, may be able to arrange for money to be deducted from their benefit and paid direct to South Staffs Water.

For more information about the above options please visit our website and take a look at our Charges Scheme.

5.3 Social tariff (Assure)

In accordance with section 44 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 we have from 1st April 2016 introduced a social tariff called Assure.



We all need a little help sometimes, and we're here to help you with our **Assure tariff.**

The Assure tariff can help household customers on a low income or who are struggling to pay their water charges; it aims to reduce water poverty and make our bills more affordable.

Customers with a household income of less than £23,492 may qualify for a three-year discounted tariff, excluding income from:

- Disability Living Allowance
- Council Tax Benefit
- Personal Independence Payment and Attendance Allowance
- Housing Benefit or Housing Element of Universal Credit
- Carer's Allowance and disabled or severely disabled element of Child Tax Credit

Discount in the first year is 60%, the second year is 40%, and the third year is 20% of your total bill. Those households with dependent children may add an additional £1500 per child to the household income amount.

For example, a household with 2 dependent children the household total income will be £26,492 (£23,492+£1500+£1500).

Full details of the tariff, eligibility criteria, application process and terms can be found on our website: www.south-staffs-water.co.uk or call us on [0800 09 30 610](tel:08000930610).

Full details of Assure are available on request, from our website or by contacting [0800 09 30 610](tel:08000930610).

Assure Assist

This is a tariff if the customer has no income coming into the home and they will probably be going onto the Universal Credit journey. This follows the same format as Assure except that the discount in the first year is 100% for 8 weeks then 60% discount for 44 weeks, the 40% in the second year.

5.4 Watersure

WaterSure is a scheme intended to help household customers with a water meter that have low incomes and use higher than average amounts of water due to a large family or medical conditions. The scheme allows eligible household customers' charges to be capped if paying for your water service based on a meter and you are receiving any of the following benefits:

- Housing Benefit
- Income Based Job Seekers Allowance
- Income Support
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit (except families in receipt of the family element only)
- Pension Credit
- Income Related Employment and Support Allowance
- Universal Credit

And have:

Three or more children under the age of 19 who are entitled to receive child benefit who are in full time education and live at the premises, or a person living at the property is diagnosed as suffering from a medical condition which causes them to use greater than normal quantities of water. Examples of such medical conditions are:

- Desquamation
- Weeping skin disease
- Incontinence
- Abdominal stoma
- Crohn's disease
- Ulcerative colitis
- Renal failure requiring dialysis at home

Or any other medical condition for which a qualified medical practitioner has provided a certificate or written evidence confirming the requirement for additional water use, and as a result of that condition our customer uses a significantly additional amount of water.

Full details of WaterSure are available upon request, from our website or by contacting us on **0800 09 30 610**.

Independent advice

If you want independent advice you can contact the National Debt Helpline on 0808 808 4000 Monday to Friday 9am-8pm and Saturday 9.30am-1pm or visit their website www.nationaldebtline.org

You can also contact organisations in your local area such as:

Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB)
www.citizensadvice.org.uk
0345 404 0506

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions. The website contains links for JobCentre Plus, the Child Support Agency, The Pension Service, Veterans UK and Disability and Carers Service.

Universal Job match www.gov.uk/jobsearch

StepChange Debt Charity www.stepchange.org

0800 138 1111 (Freephone, including mobiles)

StepChange Debt Charity is the UK's leading debt advice organisation. Previously known as Consumer Credit Counselling Service (CCCS) they have over 20 years' experience of helping people become debt free.

If you're struggling to keep on top of your money, their simple debt check will give you straightforward advice based on your circumstances.

StepChange Debt Charity is expert in helping people to manage and repay their debts. They offer tailored advice and practical solutions to help you make a fresh start.

It is important to tell us if you are receiving benefits or have approached any other organisations for help.

If your Local Authority, the Department for Work and Pensions or JobCentre Plus ask us to withhold recovery action while they look into your case, we will do so.

Where customers have approached a debt advisory service (such as the Citizens Advice Bureau) we will allow you the appropriate time to talk with them and take their advice. In line with CSAs Debt Collection guidelines, this will be set at a minimum of 30 days. However, if we do not hear from you or your supporting agency we will re-commence collection activity.

Pension Credit: If you are a pensioner and are on a low income you may be entitled to Pension Credit. To find out more call the Pension Credit claim line on freephone 0800 99 1234 or textphone 0800 169 0133.

Working Tax Credit: If you are earning a low wage and you have a family you may be entitled to Working Families Tax Credit. To find out more contact the Tax Credit helpline on 0845 300 3900 or textphone 0845 300 3909.

Other support: It may be worth contacting your Local Authority's health and social care services department and JobCentre Plus. They will not be able to give you any money to pay your water bill but they might be able to offer help and advice.

If you are experiencing extreme financial difficulties and water is among several outstanding debts then you can make an application to the South Staffordshire Water Charitable Trust. For an application form, please telephone 0345 60 70 456 or visit www.sswct.org

Alternatively, you can contact the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB), Welfare Rights Services, StepChange Debt Charity or other free debt advice agencies. It is recommended you contact one of these organisations to receive free impartial debt advice.

By agreeing to, and maintaining, a low-value payment arrangement, the Charitable Trust may be able to make a grant towards your water charges arrears. As part of the application process, we will go

through your financial circumstances with you or the debt advice service may do this and then contact us on your behalf if they feel that you will meet our Charitable Trust criteria. If you are unsure how to contact the CAB or other agencies listed above, or if you have any worries about your financial circumstances and your ability to pay your water charges, then please telephone us on 0800 09 30 610. Further information about the Charitable Trust can be found by visiting www.sswct.org

5.5 Extra help

Priority Services Register

We understand that there are times when our customers need extra help. Customers who have additional needs or require extra help can access a range of free services we offer by joining the Priority Services Register.



Customers who have difficulty reading or understanding their bills can have the information delivered in the following ways:

- Large type
- Braille or recorded onto CD
- Bills read out over the phone
- Translated into other languages
- Arrange for a copy of the bill to be sent to a nominated relative, friend or responsible who is helping them look after their affairs.

Where we need to interrupt a customer's water supply, if a customer is receiving medical treatments such as dialysis at home, as they rely on a constant supply of water we will advise you and help you with any necessary special arrangements.

Further information about the Priority Services Register can be found on our website www.south-staffs-water.co.uk/psr.

Bogus callers

All employees of South Staffs Water carry identity cards with their photograph. They will always produce this when calling at customer's homes. Call 0800 389 10 11 to check the validity of a caller.

We work with trusted partners to deliver some of our services to the very highest levels of service.

Anyone working on our behalf will carry photo identity cards with a unique number. By calling 0800 389 10 11 their identity can be verified.

If we need to enter a property we rarely go upstairs and don't need to send more than one person into the house at any one time.

Always be aware of any callers to your door –

STOP – are you expecting anybody? Do they have an appointment?

CHAIN – secure your door bar or chain before opening your door CHECK

– ask for and double-check the caller's ID

If you're still suspicious, you should call the Police or contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

For added reassurance that a caller to your home is genuine, you can register a password with us through the Priority Services Register (mentioned above). Only the relevant members of our staff will know the password, and they will use it when they call on you or your representative. If you suspect that the caller is not from South Staffs Water, advise them that you are going to call us, then close your door.

Other utility providers

If you require additional help from us, you may also want to register for help with your other utilities. Energy companies offer password schemes and other services similar to ours. To find out more you should contact your energy supplier directly and ask about their Priority Services Register.

5.6 Supporting customers in vulnerable circumstances

We're able to identify those customers who may need extra support in the following ways:

- Our Customer Service and Community teams receive training on the types of customer vulnerabilities and how to identify them
- We use data to help us to pro-actively identify customers vulnerabilities amongst our customer base
- We attend local community services such as foodbanks, warm hubs, citizens advice center's etc. to educate on our extra support services
- We work with local charities and disability groups who will signpost on our behalf and enable us to have a further reach to those who might need it
- We have a permanent Community Hub within our South Staffs region where customer can drop in to see us for any support
- We work with 3rd parties to help us identify bereaved customers without the need for them to contact us

We offer the following extra support to those customers who need it:

- We ensure that all of our customer communications are written plain English
- We offer alternative language services
- We offer billing statements in special formats such as braille and large print
- We offer an Extra Care team service for those who need dedicated ongoing support
- We have a Community who can provide face to face support services

- Our Community team can issue Foodbank vouchers to eligible customers
- We double up with local support groups and charities to ensure customers get all the advice they need in the same place at the same time
- Enforcement action won't be issued against customers that have been identified as vulnerable

5.7 Supporting customers paying through third parties

For customers paying through third parties we will:

- Treat any debt charity or agency acting on behalf of a customer as a customer of ours too
- Stop any debt collection activity once we've been notified by a third party of any Debt Relief Order (DRO) or Individual Voluntary Arrangement (IVA) in place
- Ensure that we have clear arrangements in place with any Debt Collection Agencies acting on our behalf
- Ensure that any third parties acting on our behalf provide staff training on our support packages and on identifying customer vulnerabilities

5.8 Supporting customers in debt

We'll help customers avoid falling into debt by:

- Providing clear payment reminders using a variety of contact channels such as telephone, email, letter, etc.
- Ensuring that any customers needing a billing statement in an alternative billing format are receiving it, and that this is automatically applied in response to specific Priority Service Register needs.
- Ensuring that our customers are getting any additional payment support where they are entitled such as Assure tariff, Watersure, etc.
- Ensuring that we send the customer a payment reminder where an installment has been missed on their payment plan.
- Identifying customers who may benefit from having a water meter installed in their home and offer them this service.
- Providing training to our Customer Service and Community teams on advising customers on how to be more water efficient in their home to reduce future charges.

We'll support customers in debt by:

- Providing training to our Customer Service and Community teams to ensure that the customer is greeted with empathy and treated with dignity.
- Ensuring that any customers identified as bereaved are removed from our debt collection process.
- Ensuring that alternative payment options are offered such as payment plans, low value plans, and payment breaks.
- Ensuring that any payment plans agreed with our customers are both realistic and affordable to our customers.
- Ensuring that we provide the option for our customers to have their account managed by a third party such as via DWP or a Debt Management Plan (DMP) company.
- Ensuring that our Customer Service and Community teams are trained to signpost our customers to third parties for independent advice such as debt charities and Citizens Advice.
- Ensuring that any entitlement to debt write off schemes are assessed and support and signposting to applications is given, such as grants through the SSW Charitable Trust.

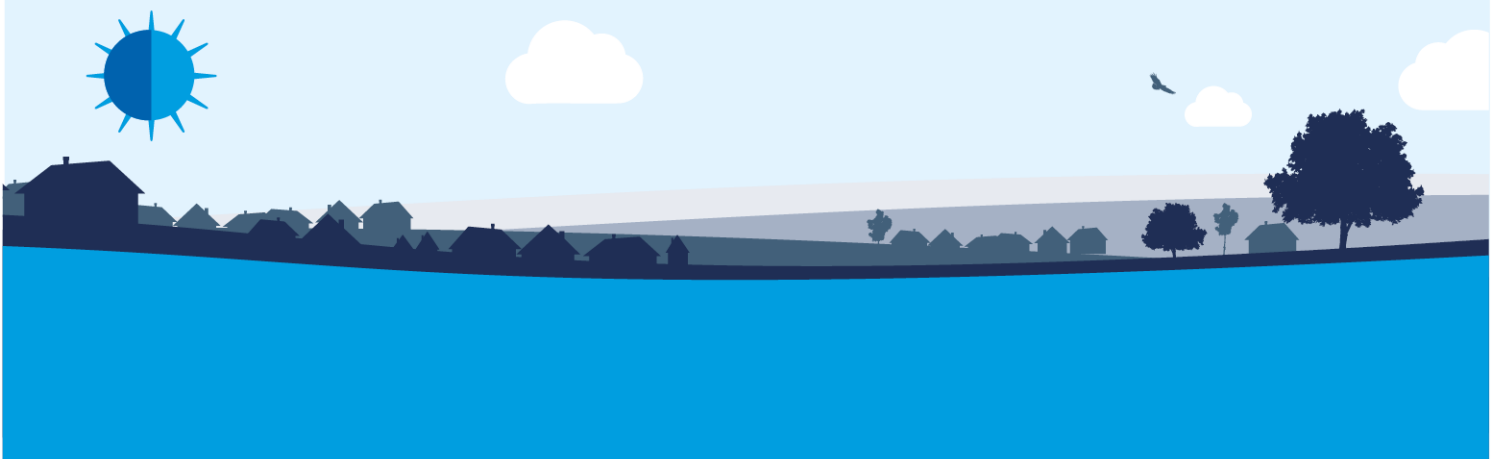
We'll ensure that as part of the debt process we:

- Explain in our payment communications any implications around further action.
- Ensure that any Debt Collection Agencies acting on our behalf are reputable and are trained to identify vulnerable customers and escalate them to us directly.
- Ensure that any complaints against the Debt Collection Agencies are escalated to us and handled by us directly.
- Only pass on debt to Debt Collection Agencies as a final resort and where our internal debt collection process has been exhausted.
- Use Credit Reference Agency data as a sensor check to ensure that we only signpost customers to Debt Collection Agencies where suitable.
- Adhere to all relevant Acts such as the Equality Act 2010 and The Debt Respite Scheme Regulations 2020.

We'll ensure that we continuously improve our debt processes by:

- Measuring customer sentiment and satisfaction with our payment reminder and debt collection processes and make changes to continuously improve the experience of our customers in debt.
- Regularly review customer feedback and complaints to continuously improve our communications to customers in debt.

Section 6: Metering



Section 6

Metering

It's generally considered fairer that we pay for the amount of water we actually use, rather than by a fixed amount, in the same way as we all pay for electricity and gas.

Water is a valuable resource and if we all use it wisely, we can do our bit to minimise waste and help reduce the amount taken from rivers and underground sources.

All houses built since 1st April 1990 are fitted with a water meter. If you have a meter, your charge is based on the water that's registered through it. Sewerage charges are also based on the water that's registered through the meter. For most customers, it's assumed that water going in to the property is equal to the water going out.

Properties built prior to this haven't been fitted with a meter and are billed for water based on rateable value. More information about our charges can be found on our website.

If you don't already have a meter, by opting to have one you not only benefit the environment by being more aware of your own use, but it may also help reduce your water bills.

You can find out whether or not you would be better off with a water meter by completing the water meter calculator which is available on our website www.south-staffs-water.co.uk/water-meter.

Using less water can also help reduce your energy bills, as you can make savings on the cost of heating water up. Household customers can have a water meter installed free of charge where possible. You can apply on line by downloading the metering form from our website: www.south-staffs-water.co.uk or contact us on 0345 45 67 063 for general advice about meters and to request a free survey to see if your property is suitable for a meter.

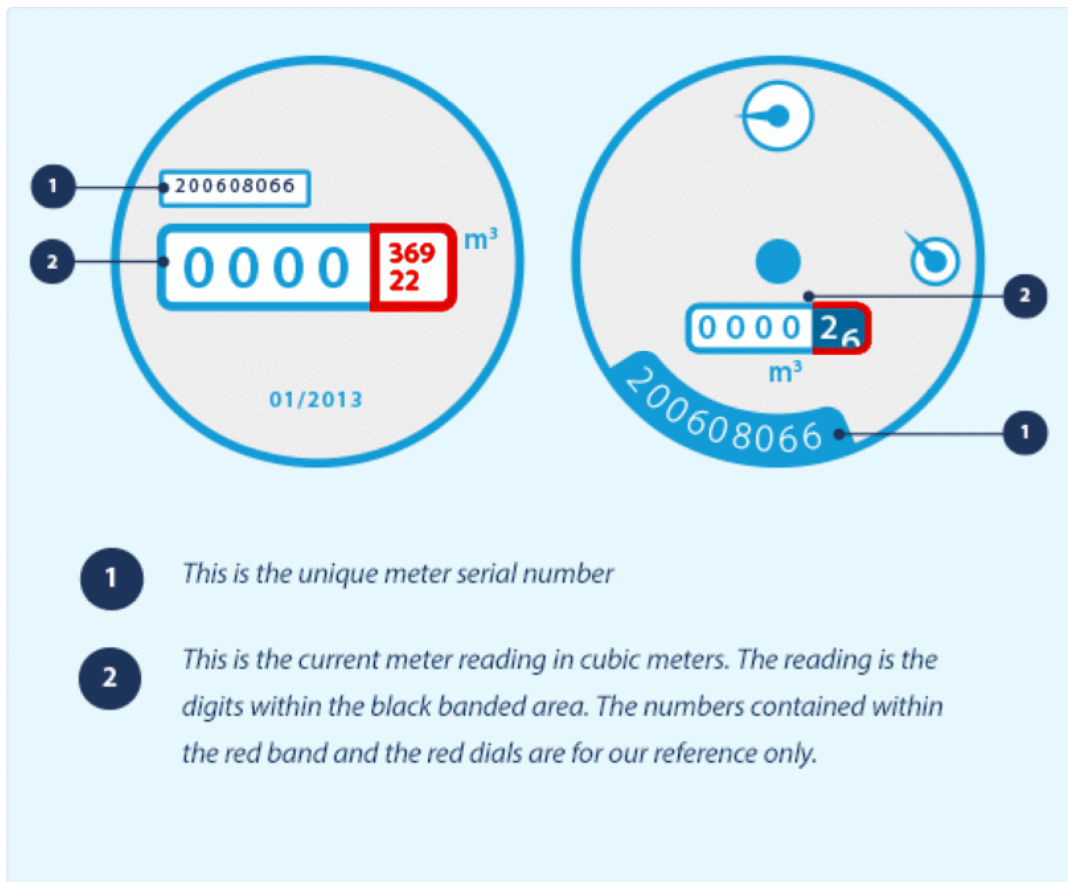
Meters are usually located in a box fitted into the public footpath outside your property boundary or inside the building on the incoming water pipe. There are a few occasions where, because of practical reasons, the meter is fitted elsewhere.

The box may have a metal or plastic lid and can usually be opened with household tools like a medium sized flat headed screwdriver. If you have any problems locating your external stop tap or opening the lid call us on 0800 389 10 11.

You can also contact us to:

- Give us a meter reading
- Tell us the meter has stopped working
- Have our meter moved – you need to let us know if for example you're having a new kitchen fitted and the meter would be in the way (you may be charged for this service)

How to read your meter –



The black numbers register the cubic metres of water you've used. Red numbers record fractions of a cubic metre you've used. It's a good idea to keep an eye on your meter readings in case you spot anything unusual which may mean there's a leak somewhere. If you think you have a leak you can use the meter to check this.

If you've received an estimated bill, or you're moving home, you can sign up to My Account on our website, where you'll be able to enter your meter reading.

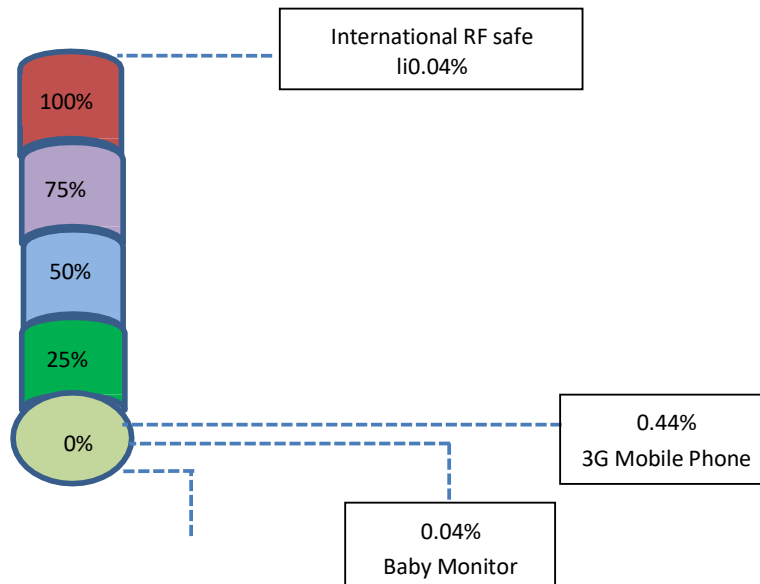
Automatic Meter Reading (AMR)

When we install a new meter it will usually feature Automatic Meter Reading technology. In most situations this enables us to read the meter remotely without having to access your property or lift the meter box lid. The type of meters we use are different to the Energy Smart Meters now installed in many homes.

Our water meters are very safe when measured against international safety limits for radio wave energy. The International Commission for Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) is the independent body responsible for advising on non-ionizing radiation. ICNIRP has established scientific based safe limits on human exposure to radio frequency (RF) waves which have been recommended by the European Commission to its Member States.

RF waves are a form of electromagnetic energy and are present all around us, both from natural

sources such as the sun and other stars, movement of the earth’s crust and from man-made devices that utilise RF waves, such as microwave ovens, Wi-Fi Routers, cordless phones, 3G mobile phones and other wireless devices.



According to scientific research the effect from RF waves from our meters is 88,000 times lower than the ICNIRP safety limit at a distance of 15cm and 2.2 million times lower at a distance of 1m.

If you have a water meter you may be eligible for special tariffs that are available to some customers. See section 7.2 for more information if you have a low income or section 6.4 if you have high water usage due to a medical condition.

If you do opt for a water meter, you have the option to revert back to rateable value charges within 24 months, although the meter will remain in place. Any subsequent occupiers of this property will be metered.

There are many easy ways to save water in the home. Our handy tips will have you saving water, and money, in no time. Visit our website for more information and to claim your free water saving devices.

Compulsory metering

It's compulsory to have a water meter fitted in cases where a substantial amount of water would be used that's over and above that of a normal household. These are:

- If you use a garden sprinkler
- If you leave a hosepipe running unattended
- If you have a swimming pool or garden pond with a capacity greater than 10,000 litres

Universal Metering

From 2025 onwards, we aim to fit meters in all properties in our region that are not currently metered. This follows our PR24 plan aiming to reduce consumption, leakage and to improve our water resources as a water stressed region by universally fitting meters across both of our regions. Customers who are part of this programme will be contacted in advance to advise on when we will be fitting meters in their area. We will aim to fit meters externally, and if this is not possible, or if there is a more optimum location at your property, we will look to fit a meter inside your property.

When we fit the meter, you will be charged on the amount you use from the point at which we take a meter reading.

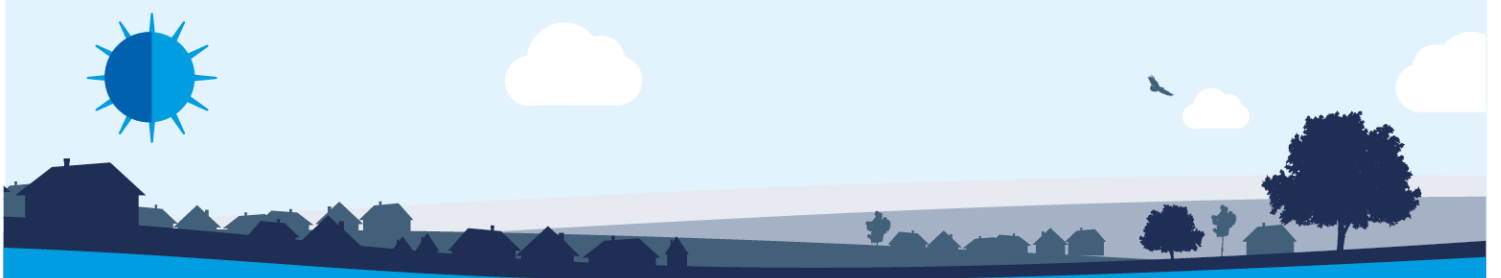
If you are struggling to pay, there are many ways we can help –

- We have different tariffs available, including our Assure social tariff which is designed to help customers on a low income. To explore our financial help options, head to our website.
- For debt support, there are many organisations who can help. Head to our website.

Water meters are being installed as part of a nationwide initiative to improve the efficiency and sustainability of water use. Installing meters helps to:

- **Ensure fairness** – Customers only pay for the water they actually use, rather than a fixed charge based on the size of their home.
- **Encourage water conservation** – Metered usage helps people become more aware of how much water they're using, which often leads to reduced consumption.
- **Plan for the future** – Monitoring water usage helps water companies identify leaks more quickly and plan improvements to the network.
- **Comply with regulations** – Installing water meters is a legal requirement to manage water resources effectively, especially where there is pressure on supplies.

Section 7: Our complaints procedure



Section 7

Our complaints procedure

We aim to provide an excellent service for you, but sometimes things can go wrong. We take complaints very seriously, so if you are not happy with our service we will do our best to put things right.

We follow an approved complaints process and have a leaflet entitled: About our Customer Complaints Procedure for you that explains the process. Visit us at www.south-staffs-water.co.uk/contact-us/making-a-complaint to see the details or call us on 0345 60 70 456. In summary, the complaints process is as follows:

Making a complaint

Step 1

If you have a complaint please call us in the first instance on 0345 60 70 456. Our overriding aim is to resolve your complaint as efficiently and effectively as possible and if possible we will provide an immediate response.

While we don't provide sewerage services, we bill and collect charges for used water and surface water drainage on behalf of Severn Trent Water so that you only receive a single bill.

We will answer complaints about sewerage charges, but if your complaint is about your sewerage pipes or services, please contact Severn Trent Water.

Complaints about your bill (local)
0345 60 70 456

Complaints about your water supply (freephone)
0800 389 10 11

If you are not happy with the outcome of your call, you can write to us:

Customer Relations
South Staffs Water
Green Lane
Walsall
WS2 7PD

Under our Customer Promise, if we fail to respond to your written complaint within 10 working days from receipt we will automatically issue you with a payment of £30.

Step 2

We hope that you will always be satisfied with our response, but if not, please write to our Service Delivery Team Manager at the same address.

Step 3

If you are dissatisfied with the way your complaint has been dealt with you can request an independent review from the CCW the voice for water consumers which represents water and sewerage consumers.

Tel: 0300 034 2222

Fax: 0121 345 1010

CCW the voice for water consumers
23 Stephenson Street
Birmingham
B2 4BH

Email: central@ccwater.org.uk

Website: www.ccwater.org.uk

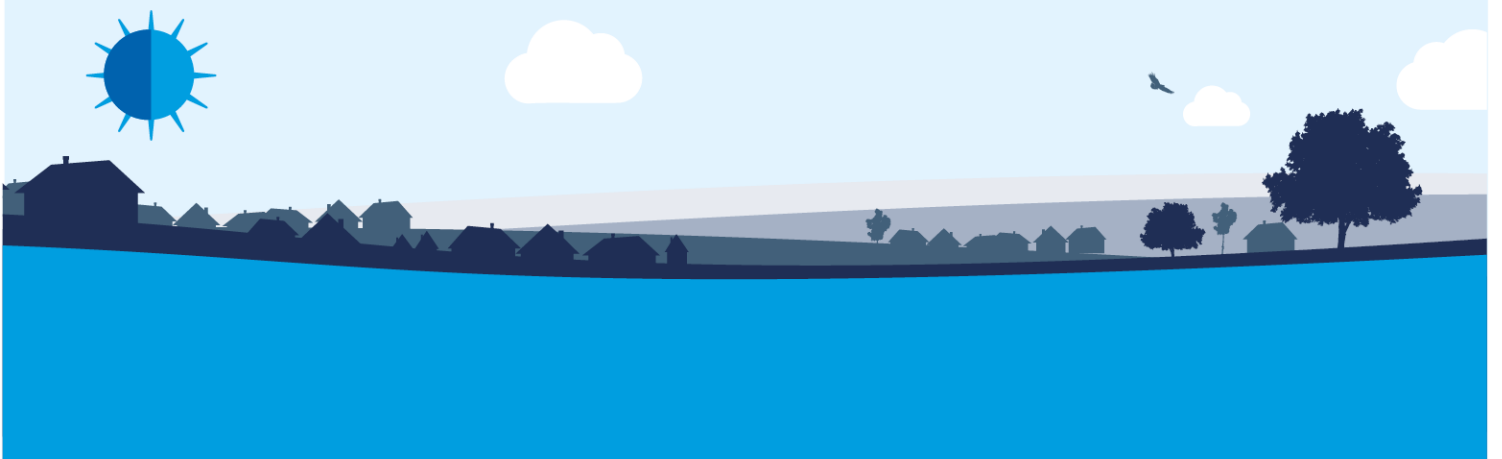
Step 4

If you remain dissatisfied following CCWater's initial efforts to resolve your complaint, CCW can offer mediation between both parties to find a fair resolution.

Where mediation is not suitable, CCW may recommend independent dispute resolution where an adjudicator reviews your complaint and makes a final, binding decision on the outcome. Your Advisor at CCW will discuss this with you, including what you need to do, the level of support they can offer you and your likelihood of the adjudication outcome finding in your favour.

Section 8:

Our Customer Promise



Section 8

Our Customer Promise

We are committed to continually improving our standards of customer service. We operate a Customer Promise, which covers the terms of the statutory Guaranteed Standards Scheme and sets out our additional customer service promises for more information you can visit our website, www.south-staffs-water.co.uk. In line with our Customer Promise there are a number of specific circumstances where we will credit your account or make payment if we fail to meet our Guaranteed Standards. A summary of our Promise is detailed below.

8.1 Keeping appointments

When we make an appointment to visit you, we will always contact you to see when's best for you and if we ever need to rearrange or cancel we will give you at least 24 hours' notice. If we fail to meet these guidelines for an appointment we will give you £20.

8.2 Responding to written correspondence

We will reply to your written enquiry about your bill within 10 working days. If you ask for a change to your payment arrangements, (for example, to pay by instalments) and we cannot accept the change we will write and tell you the reason why within five working days of your request. We will reply within 10 working days to any letter of complaint. If we fail to meet any of these standards, we will give you £30.

If we fail to make an automatic payment to you for any of the above standards within 20 working days following a payment becoming due and you submit a written claim within three months we will pay you a further £20.

8.3 Keeping the water flowing

Occasionally we need to turn off the water supply to carry out essential planned work. We will always let you know in advance and tell you when the supply will be restored. If the supply is off for more than four hours, and we have failed to give at least 48 hours' notice, you may be eligible for a payment under the terms of our Guaranteed Standards Scheme.

After an emergency or unplanned interruption such as a burst water main, we will restore supplies within 12 hours for most bursts or within 48 hours if it is a burst on a strategic main. If necessary, we will provide an alternative supply. If we fail to meet these standards, we will give £20.

We shall pay you a further £10 for every additional 24 hours you are without supply. Sometimes it is difficult to know who has been affected by supply interruptions. If you have been affected and we have not made an automatic payment to you within 20 working days of the interruption then please write to us. We will then make an additional payment to you of £20.

8.4 Maintaining pressure

We aim to provide you with water at sufficient pressure to enable you to meet your normal domestic needs. If you are affected by low pressure of less than seven metres static head on two occasions each lasting one hour or more in a period of 28 consecutive days you may claim a payment once in any year. This payment will only be made once in any year in accordance with current Guaranteed Standards of Service exclusions.

8.5 Exceptional circumstances

The making of any payment shall not constitute an omission of liability for any other purpose. Similarly, acceptance of a payment by you will not affect any other liability we may owe to you. Our guarantees do not apply if we are prevented from meeting our standards by third party actions or exceptional circumstances or severe weather conditions or industrial action.

8.6 Additional promises

We will:

- Reduce your water charges if your supply is continuously interrupted on three or more occasions during any 12 month period. A written claim must be received within three months of the third interruption
- Pay you £10 if we do not despatch a refund cheque to you within 10 working days and you submit a written claim within three months
- Pay you automatically £10 if we issue a notice of boil water in an unplanned emergency (excluding mains rehabilitation works)
- Pay you £10 if we do not despatch two metered bills within 12 calendar months and you submit a written claim within three months
- Provide compensation if you suffer loss of supply as a result of our mismanagement during a drought

Where a dispute arises between a customer and the company regarding a payment, the matter can be referred by either party to Ofwat for determination.

Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat)

Centre City Tower

7 Hill Street

Birmingham

B5 4UA

Telephone: 0121 644 7500

E-mail - enquiries@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.ofwat.gov.uk

8.7 Customer Engagement

Engaging with our customers to shape our Code of Practice

As a public service provider, the views and preferences of our customers sit at the heart of our decision making, including those made to inform policies linked to the core services we provide to our customers.

To ensure actionable insights, transparency and fairness, it is essential that we use a range of high-quality engagement methods to effectively capture and interpret the views of our customers.

Since 2017, our customer engagement programme has developed significantly and is used to inform strategic and everyday decisions. We engage with over 15,000 customers and water consumers each year to inform a range of decisions.

One of the key principles of our programme is to engage with customers on decisions where they can have a meaningful say on the decisions we make, in the areas they tell us are most important to them.

Examples of engagement approaches with customers to inform this Code of Practice are detailed below. We combine all these insights to understand the different needs and views of customers to directly inform our decision making. Our programme also includes customers who are registered to receive financial support and/or are on our Priority Services Register.

Our Business as Usual programme

- Between 2019 and 2024 we ran our H2Online Community, where we engaged weekly with hundreds of members several time a month, on a range of topics related to our services and the water sector. Through several activities, we asked members to comment on various sections of this document to tell us their views on how we could improve our policies and how we explain them to customers. Their voices have directly shaped the insights, alongside the other programmes detailed below. Specifically, we asked customers to:
 - review the content in **Section 3** to ensure the content was clear
 - review the way we presented information about water charges in **Section 4**.
 - During 2024-25 we also ran a group called 'Priority Watch' on H2Online where customers who are on or are eligible to be on our Priority Services Register took part in a series of activities on how we can improve the support we offer – **Section 5**.
- Since 2015, we have asked customers for feedback following an interaction with us to tell us what we did well and what we could do better. We review this insight weekly, alongside the feedback customers give our frontline teams and the complaints we receive when we don't get things right. These reviews help us to keep this document updated inline with our customers changing priorities and views.
- Since 2015 we have asked our customer to rate our performance of how we are developing our business plan. This tracker study covers a wide range of areas from satisfaction, trust and value for money perceptions transparency through to how aware customers are of the services we offer and how well we deliver these. awareness of services.
- Since 2018 we have run a Young Innovators' Panel where up to 25 students join us at our offices to work on a business task and tell us about what's important to their generation.
- We also draw on research reports from our regulators, CCW, other utility companies, aceramic partners and organisations like the UK Customer Service institute (UKCSI) to inform our decision making.

Our Strategic research programme

- All water companies need to submit plans to the regulators in the water sector on a regular basis to demonstrate that they are spending the money customers pay for their water bills in the areas that matter to them, whilst keeping bills affordable.
- Our Price Review 2019 and (PR19) Price Review 2024 (PR24) customer engagement programmes, have informed decisions in our business plans. Our PR24 and Long-Term Delivery Strategy resarch programme from 2020-2023 reached over **92,500** customers and was our most in-depth and widest reaching programme ever. It aimed to fully understand what our diverse population of customers and wider stakeholders and citizens expect us to deliver now, and in the future. Specifically, related to this Code of Practice, we undertook a robust qualitative and quantitative research to:
 - support the development of our package of financial support and how we best communicate this to customers - **see section 5.2 and 5.3 for details of our support packages**
 - work with customers to make it easier to apply for and access support. This included exploring the different ways in which customers may be vulnerable and build up a greater understanding of what services and support these customers require. Also, to identify how services can be developed to meet the current and future needs of customers as well as how best to reach out to these individuals and ensure that their needs are being met - **see section 5.5 and 5.8 for details of our support services**
 - engage customers on our metering policy, including engaging with customers about how we should roll out our universal metering programme that aims to fit a water meter to every home by 2035- **see section 6**.

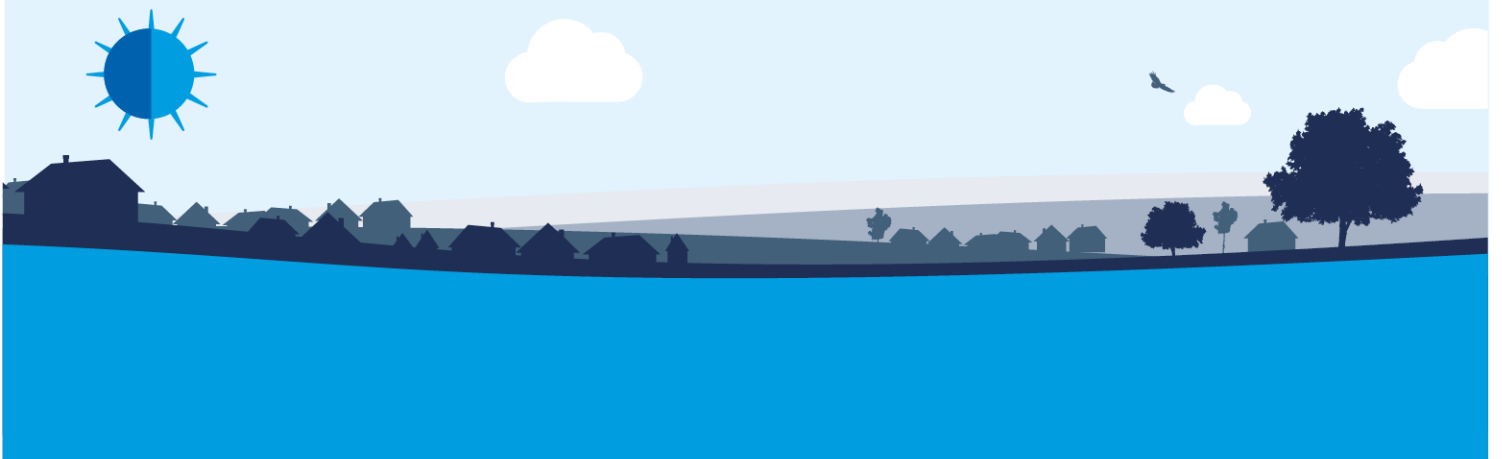
Engaging with our wider stakeholders to shape our Code of Practice

Alongside our customer engagement programme, we also have dialogue with a wide range of expert stakeholders and partners. We have a partnership network with more than **350** organisations. This includes debt advice services, local health providers, local authorities, charities, food banks, social housing providers. We regularly seek, and capture feedback from them to help improve our services and shape our policies, particularly for customers who are facing challenging circumstances. Examples include:

- **Visually impaired customers engagement:** meeting with a local support group (Sandwell Visually Impaired) to understand what we should be doing to support visually impaired customers. Blind customers who would be impacted by street works, and supply interruptions.
- **Deaf community customers engagement:** meeting with a local support group (Sandwell Deaf Community Association) to understand what we should be doing to support deaf customers and those who use BSL. Those customers who use BSL as their communication language will not always be able to read English in the written word, and we must look at ways we can include our BSL customers.
- **Dementia support:** Dementia and support for our customers experiencing this illness will increase in the future. We have worked with a local dementia support group (St Albans Community Association) as well as Admiral Nurses.
- **Responding to feedback from customers received from Citizens Advice.** For example, being in receipt of Universal Credit (UC) means that the customer must wait for their money, so they struggle to pay their bill. We introduced Assure Assist and rolled this out to first point of contact stakeholders for UC claims.

Since 2017 we have worked with our Independent Challenge Group (ICG). The ICG's role it is to challenge and input into our customer and stakeholder engagement programme to ensure it is high-quality and also to challenge the company's performance to represent the customer voice through the members of the ICG's expertise.

Section 9: Sewerage services



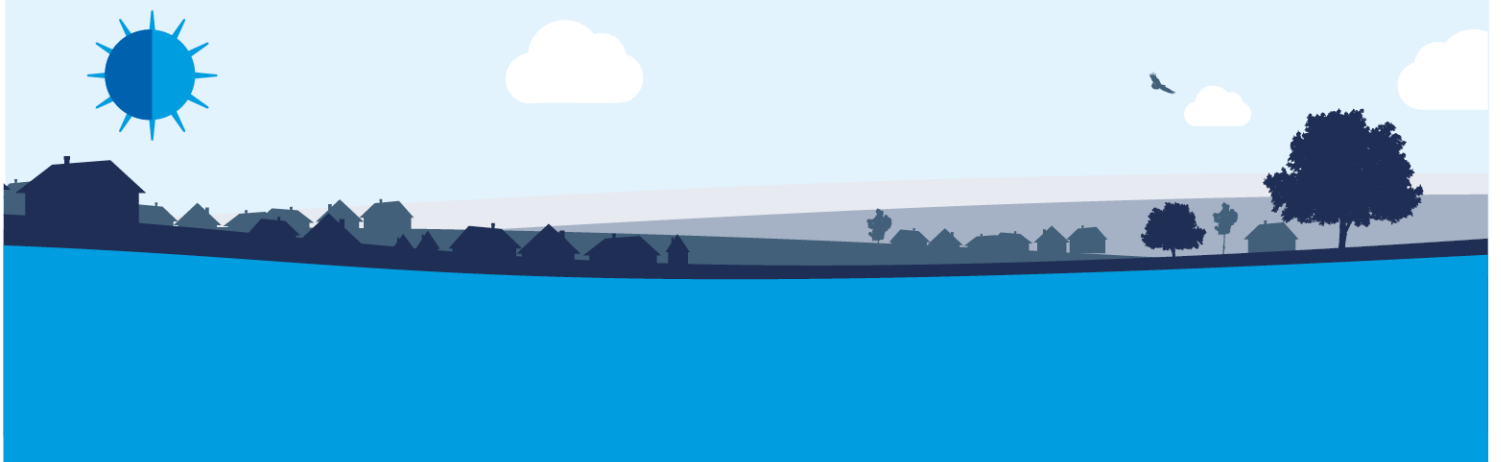
Section 9

Sewerage services

Most sewers in our area are maintained by Severn Trent Water. If you have a problem or need more information please contact Severn Trent Water at 2 St John's Street, Coventry, CV1 2LZ or visit their website – www.stwater.co.uk, telephone: 0800 783 4444.

Section 10:

Key telephone numbers



Section 10

Key telephone numbers and addresses

South Staffs Water

Green Lane
Walsall WS2
7PD

www.south-staffs-water.co.uk

CUSTOMER ENQUIRY NUMBERS

Billing enquiries: 0345 60 70 456

Difficulty paying: 0800 09 30 610

Request a Water Meter: 0345 60 70 456

Supply problems & emergencies: 0800 389 10 11

Report a leak: 0800 389 10 11

SEWERAGE AND DRAINAGE SERVICES

Severn Trent Water

2 St John's Street, Coventry, CV1 2LZ

0800 783 4444

Website: www.stwater.co.uk

CCW the voice for water consumers

Customers are represented in the water industry by an independent body called the CCW.

23 Stephenson Street

Birmingham

B2 4BH

Telephone: 0300 034 2222

Email: enquiries@ccwater.org.uk

Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat)

Centre City Tower

7 Hill Street

Birmingham

B5 4UA

Telephone: 0121 644 7500

Email: enquiries@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.ofwat.gov.uk