This leaflet forms part of our code of practice for domestic customers, which provides customers with essential information about our company. All of our codes of practice are approved by Ofwat.

Other leaflets within our code of practice which are also available in Braille, large print, CD or on audio tape:

- Our promise to you (our service level and how we will compensate you if things go wrong)
- Getting answers (who to contact and how we will manage your complaint)
- Getting water to your home
- Dealing with leaks (our code of practice on leakage, guidance on pipe ownership and our repair policy)
- Your water meter
- Paying your water bill
- Managing debt (our code of practice on debt)
- Sewerage services
- Water and sewerage watchdogs (who to contact for additional information)

We also offer leaflets on sewer flooding, protecting the environment and water efficiency in the home and garden.

To order any of the above, please call **0845 717 1100**.

Northumbrian Water
Abbey Road
Pity Me
Durham
DH1 5FJ
www.nwl.co.uk

Printed on environmentally friendly paper

March 2007

Can we help you?

A guide to our services for customers who need extra help.

How to contact us

For all billing enquiries:
Call our Customer Centre on **0845 733 5566** between 8am and 8pm, Monday to Friday, and between 8am and 1pm, Saturday.

For all water and sewage enquiries:
Call our Customer Centre on **0845 717 1100** (24 hours).

For all water and sewage flooding enquiries:
Call our Customer Centre on **0800 328 7648** (24 hours).

For all leisure enquiries:
Call **0870 240 3549** between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Or write to:
Northumbrian Water
PO Box 300
Durham DH1 9WQ

Or by email through our website:
www.nwl.co.uk

Leakline:
If you have a leak on your property or suspect there may be one in the verge or road, please call 24 hours **0800 393 084** (freephone).

Minicom enquiries:
A minicom text only facility is available for the deaf and hard of hearing. To use this service please call **0845 723 1254**.
We also accept calls from RNID Typetalk.

Language Line (Comunicado):
If English is not your first language you can call **0845 717 1100** for our free telephone interpretation service.

Consumer Council for Water Northumbria
Eighth Floor
Northgate House
St Augustines Way
Darlington DL1 1XA

Tel: **0845 708 9367**
Fax: **01325 369 269**
Email: **northumbria@ccwater.org.uk**

Help is at hand

Northumbrian Water is pleased to offer a wide range of services, designed for those customers who may, on occasion, need extra special help. These services are free of charge.

Other service providers such as gas, electricity and telephone companies may operate a similar register for customers.

This leaflet will help you decide if you could benefit from any of the services, and if so, explains how you can take advantage of them. We have also included a simple application form to allow you to register with us for your chosen services.

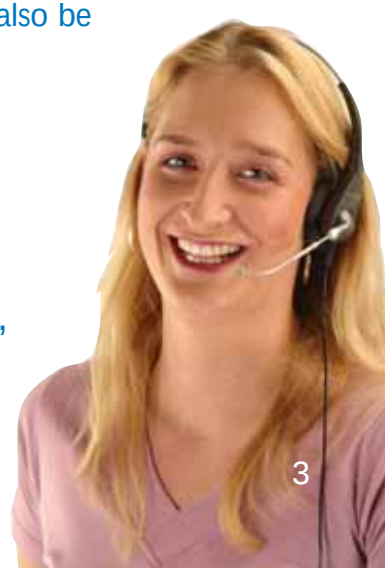
If you prefer, you can register by telephone.
Call us on **0845 717 1100** between 8am and 8pm, Monday to Friday, 9am and 4pm, Saturday and 10am and 4pm Sunday.
If your water or sewerage services are supplied by a different company, you will also need to advise them of your requirements.

Hartlepool Water:	01429 858050
United Utilities:	0845 746 1100
Yorkshire Water:	0845 124 2420

Information on our special assistance register is available on our website **www.nwl.co.uk** which can also be accessed if you use a screenreader facility.

Any information given will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be available to relevant members of Northumbrian Water employees and our agents.

This leaflet is also available in Braille, large print, CD and on audio tape.



Maintaining your supply

We will take extra special care not to interrupt or restrict the supplies to customers with specific health, family and other special needs. However, sometimes we may have to turn off or restrict water supplies so we can carry out essential repairs or because of an emergency. If so, wherever possible, we will make sure that you receive information about any interruptions, where the emergency supplies can be found and when we hope to be able to restore supplies to normal.

This will normally be by loud hailer or a card through the door, unless we are aware that this is not a suitable method of contacting you.

If you are on home dialysis or you need water due to a medical condition, to take medication or to prepare babies bottles, we can also supply you with bottled water free of charge.

You can help us to provide the best possible service, by letting us know if an interruption to the water supply would cause you particular problems.

Please complete the application form with this leaflet, or register by telephone on **0845 717 1100**.

How easily could you get out of your home in the event of a flooding incident?

Fortunately, flooding from our water mains or from the public sewerage system is a relatively rare event. It is easy to imagine the undoubted distress flooding of this nature causes. To receive a copy of our information leaflet on sewer flooding call us on **0845 717 1100**.

However, have you considered how easily you and your family could get safely out of your home?

If, for example, you have mobility problems or are visually impaired it is likely that you would find it very difficult to exit your home in complete safety as a result of water or sewage ingress. If you are on our register and you inform us that you are being flooded, we will be able to prioritise your call more effectively and if required ensure that you receive on-site assistance to help you safely vacate your home if no one is nearby to help you. Remember the emergency services can assist in helping to escape when flooding happens, no matter what the cause.

If you experience a flooding incident, please call us on our freephone floodline number 0800 328 7648.

Our protect scheme criteria

Some customers who have a water meter and have to use large amounts of water, are entitled to an alternative charge in some circumstances. For customers on our 'protect scheme', their water bills will be based on an average charge rather than the amount of water they use. However if the meter reading is less than the average charge, this is the amount they will pay.

There are government regulations to protect customers receiving certain benefits or tax credits and living in metered properties. The first is a household containing an individual who is entitled to receive child benefit for three or more children up to the age of 19, resident in the property and in full time education. The second is any household containing an individual who has a particular medical condition that causes them to use a significant amount of water. This individual or a member of the household should be in receipt of certain benefits to qualify. These customers do not have to pay more than the average household bill. However if the meter reading is **less** than the average household bill, then this is the amount the customer will pay.

Only certain medical conditions apply, and these are:

- Kidney failure requiring home dialysis
- Abdominal stomas
- Desquamation (flaky skin loss)
- Weeping skin disease (eczema, psoriasis, varicose ulceration)
- Incontinence
- Crohn's disease
- Ulcerative colitis

These conditions are those specifically covered by the government regulations. However, we will consider applications based on other medical conditions that involve significant use of water if this is supported by a doctor's certificate.

In addition you, or one of the people in your household, must be receiving one of the following means tested benefits:

- Council Tax benefit
- Housing benefit
- Income support
- Income-based jobseekers allowance
- Working tax credit
- Child tax credit (except families in receipt of the family element only)
- Pension credit

Please contact our Customer Centre for further details on **0845 733 5566.**

If you do not have a water meter, but would like further information about having one installed with a view to reducing your water bill, please contact us on **0845 733 5566**. In most cases meter installation is free of charge.

Safeguard against bogus callers

Please be aware that BOGUS CALLERS (that is people who claim to be employed by Northumbrian Water or 'the water board' but who are only interested in stealing from your property) are known to operate in our supply area. If you are in doubt about the validity of a caller claiming to be from Northumbrian Water, DO NOT let them into your property.

Are you expecting anyone? Always attach the safety chain before opening your door.

Look for the blue and green Northumbrian Water logo on vehicles and clothing.

NORTHUMBRIAN WATER

Every representative carries an identity card with the Northumbrian Water logo and a Braille strip. Ring the number on the card to confirm the caller's identity if you are still unsure. Remember our representative will be happy to wait outside while you check their identification.

Register a password with us for added peace of mind. Do not disclose it to anyone else. Each time we visit you, we will use the password. If you don't hear the right word, don't admit the caller – it's as simple as that! To register a password, use the form in this leaflet, or call us on **0845 717 1100.**

Take care. If in doubt, **KEEP THEM OUT** and telephone our Customer Centre or the Police.

Paying your bill

If you have difficulty reading your bill, we can assist in the following ways:

- offer your bill in Braille, large print, CD or on audio tape
- supply you with a magnifying sheet
- read your bill to you over the telephone
- send your bill to a friend or relative who has agreed to help you.

If you let us know which method would help you most, we will do our best to supply the information in this way.

Meter reading service

If you have a water meter and cannot read it yourself, we can provide up to two extra readings each year and make no charge for this service.

Water appliances

If bath taps, showers and other water-using gadgets are becoming difficult to handle, help is at hand.

Your local Health and Social Services Department of the Local Authority can provide you with certain fixtures, free of charge, for the bathroom and kitchen, which will help make your life easier. They are also available to buy.

To find out more about the range of assistance available, contact your occupational therapist or community-based occupational therapist at your local Health and Social Services Department. (See your local telephone directory.)

Useful information guides are also available from the Royal Association for Disability & Rehabilitation (RADAR) on **0207 250 3222** and the Disabled Living Foundation on **0845 130 9177.**

Finding out more

A better service for all

Please tell us if there is anything you think we need to know in order to give you the best possible service. Remember that how much you tell us is up to you, and anything you do tell us will be kept strictly confidential.

We offer a free translation and transcription service for customers who do not speak English as their first language. We can write to customers in their chosen language or arrange for an interpreter to be present at an appointed time. If you would like to discuss your account using British Sign Language with RNID approved interpreters we can arrange this for you free of charge.

Access to our head office

We have facilities at our head office to enable customers who use a wheelchair to gain access to the building. This location is Abbey Road, Pity Me, Durham DH1 5FJ.

Access for all

You will know us as your local water and sewerage provider, but did you realise that it's the management of those water supplies that has resulted in some of the most relaxing and peaceful locations accessible and available right on your doorstep!

Kielder Water offers a truly stunning location for an away from it all holiday, with wheelchair accessible lodges, visitor centre, trails and picnic sites, access is easier for all.

And it doesn't stop there - do you know about our lakes and reservoirs in the north east? We have 22, just waiting to be discovered by you.

At selected sites across the region, we have introduced, or plan to introduce over the next five years, a range of improvements to make access easier for all. Here are just some of the improvements which have been made:

- angling platforms for the elderly and disabled
- a lifting hoist for access to boats at Kielder
- visitor centres, trails, picnic sites and bird hides which are accessible by wheelchair
- hearing aid enhancement system.

Give our leisure team a call on **0870 240 3549** for more detailed information on what is available at any of our sites.