

This leaflet forms part of our Code of Practice for Domestic Customers, which provides customers with essential information about our company. All our codes are approved by Ofwat.

Other leaflets within our Code of Practice are available:

- Managing debt (Our Code of Practice on debt)
- Dealing with leaks (Our Code of Practice on leakage, guidance on pipe ownership and our repair policy)
- Special needs (a range of services we offer for customers with particular requirements)
- Getting answers (who to contact and how we will manage your complaint)
- Water watchdogs (who to contact for additional information)
- Your water meter
- Getting water to your home
- Paying your water bill
- Sewerage

To order any Code of Practice leaflet, in large print or on audio cassette, please call **0845 717 1100** (local charge).

We also offer leaflets on water efficiency in the home and garden.

Northumbrian Water  
Abbey Road  
Pity Me  
Durham  
DH1 5FJ

[www.nwl.co.uk](http://www.nwl.co.uk)

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friendly paper  
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Our  
promise  
to you

Our guaranteed standards of service

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## How to contact us

### By telephone:

**0845 733 5566** (local charge 8am-8pm weekdays, 8am-1pm Saturdays)  
- Billing and account enquiries

**0845 717 1100** (local charge 24 hours)  
- Non-billing and service queries

**0800 393 084** - Freephone leakline

**0800 328 7648** - Freephone floodline

**In writing:**  
Northumbrian Water, PO Box 300,  
Durham DH1 5WQ

**By email:**  
customercentre@nwl.co.uk

### Minicom:

A minicom text facility is available for people with speech or hearing difficulties: **0845 723 1254** (local charge)

### Language Line:

If English is not your first language, we offer a free translation service on **0845 717 1100** (local charge)

Your local, independent watchdog

**WaterVoice Northumbria**  
Eighth Floor, Northgate House,  
St Augustines Way,  
Darlington DL1 1XA

Telephone **0845 708 9367** (local charge)

Fax: **01325 369 269**

Email: [northumbria@watervoice.org.uk](mailto:northumbria@watervoice.org.uk)

## Our promise to you

You are an important and valued customer of Northumbrian Water and you have the right to expect consistently top quality service from us.

We have developed a customer care package which covers the service standards we promise to deliver.

**If we fail to meet any of these standards, we will pay you compensation of at least £20, although in some circumstances it can be more than that.** The exact amounts are set out in this booklet and payments will be made **automatically**, unless specified. **If we fail to do this, you can claim a further £20 from us within 3 months of our failure.**

Our promises meet and in many instances exceed the guaranteed service standards required by the Office of Water Services (Ofwat).

## Appointments

- We will make an appointment with you for either before or after 1pm or for a two-hour time band if you request this. If one of our employees or a contractor working for us, makes an appointment to visit you, they should give you at least 24 hours notice if they need to change the arrangements.

If a major emergency prevents us from keeping the appointment, we will let you know, as long as we have a phone number where we can contact you.

**If, for any reason, we do not keep an appointment we have made with you or give you at least 24 hours notice of a change, we will automatically pay you £30. This does not apply if there has been an emergency,**

## Complaints

- If you make a complaint in writing or by email about your water, sewerage or billing service, we will reply in writing within 10 working days of receiving your complaint. **If we do not, then you will automatically receive £30 compensation.**
- Wherever possible we will answer telephone complaints about your water, sewerage or billing services immediately. However, if we need to investigate your complaint, we will give you a contact name and ensure you receive a response within 10 working days. If you request it, we will confirm our response in writing. **If we fail to do this we will send you £20 compensation.**

Our code of practice for complaints explains in detail how we will deal with any complaint. You can get a copy of this booklet 'Getting answers,' by calling **0845 717 1100** (local charge).

## Your water meter

- We will provide at least one bill approximately every three months and, if we can get access, we guarantee to read your meter at least once a year. **If we fail to do this then you will automatically receive £20 compensation.**
- If your bill is based on an estimate and you contact us to request an actual reading, we will read your meter within 5 working days (provided that we have unrestricted access to your meter). **If we fail to do this, we will send you £20.**
- If you are a domestic customer and your meter is faulty, we will repair or replace it within 20 working days of you telling us (or 20 working days from when we read the meter if the fault was discovered then). **If not, then you will automatically receive £20 compensation.**
- If you are a domestic customer, the first time you have a high meter reading because of a leak on your external pipework, **we will make an allowance on your bill for the lost water. This will apply as long as the leak is repaired within one month of notification. We may agree to allow more time.**
- If you are moving we will read your meter on the day you move, as long as you give us 5 working days notice. **If we fail to do this then you will automatically receive £20 compensation.**
- We will aim to install your free meter within 3 months of receiving your application. **If we fail, you will pay as if you were metered from the start of the fourth month. This means you will not have to pay more as a result of our delay.**
- If you'd like a water meter and you don't qualify for our free meter installation service, then we aim to install the meter within 15 working days of receiving your payment. **If we fail to do this then you will automatically receive £20 compensation.**
- If we need to change your meter, we will leave written details of the date of change, the meter readings taken on the day and the serial number of the new meter. **Please let us know if we do not do this and you will receive £20 compensation.**
- If our work causes discolouration of your water supply and we ask you to run the water until it clears, **we will credit your account with the amount equivalent to 5 cubic metres (5000 litres or 1100 gallons).**

## Paying your bill

- If you write and ask us to change the way you pay your bill, and we cannot do this, we will reply within 5 working days from the date we receive your letter. **If we fail to do this then you will automatically receive £20 compensation.**
- We will arrange any new method of payment we have agreed to within 10 working days of receiving your enquiry. **If not, then you will automatically receive £20 compensation.**
- We will reply to all your queries (written and telephone) about the correctness of your bill within 10 working days of receiving your enquiry. **If not, you will automatically receive £20 compensation.**
- We will send you a replacement bill within 10 working days of receiving your request. **If not, you will automatically receive £20 compensation.**
- We will send you a receipt within 5 working days of receiving your request. **If not, you will automatically receive £20 compensation.**
- If you move into or out of a property with an unmetered supply, we will send you a bill or a refund within 10 working days of you letting us know you are moving. **If we fail to do this then you will automatically receive £20 compensation.**
- We will not apply for a county court claim if the DSS, Social Services, Benefits Agency or WaterVoice Northumbria has asked us not to. **If we do not keep to this standard, we will pay £50 for any distress and inconvenience we may have caused. We will also withdraw the claim.**
- If we apply for a county court claim and we have already received payment settling your bill, **we will withdraw the claim immediately and pay £50 for any distress and inconvenience we may have caused.**
- If the court accepts a request to set aside judgment and orders us to pay costs, **we will also pay £70 for any distress and inconvenience we may have caused.**



## Turning off your water supply...



### ..for planned work

If we need to do maintenance work to improve the water mains, we may sometimes have to turn off your water supply. If you have any special needs, such as a medical condition which, if the water was turned off, could cause a problem, please let us know so that we can provide extra help, such as supplying bottled water. Why not join our special needs register? You can phone our Customer Centre for a leaflet or to register on **0845 717 1100** (local charge).

- If we need to turn off the water supply to your property for between 1 and 4 hours, we will let you know at least 12 hours beforehand.
- If we need to turn off the water supply to your property for more than 4 hours, we will let you know in writing at least 48 hours beforehand and tell you when it will be turned back on again. We will also give you a telephone number to ring for extra help if you need it. We will turn the water back on at the time we have said, if not before.

**If we do not keep any of the above guarantees we will pay you £20 if you are a domestic customer and £50 if you are a business customer.**

### ..in an emergency

If there is a burst water main or another emergency, we will not be able to warn you that your water will be off. We will do our best to let you know what is happening by using cards, loudhailers, and if appropriate, local radio. If necessary, we will provide an alternative supply of water. This will be easier if you have already told us about any special needs you have. Why not give us a call today and register?

- In most emergencies we will put your supply back on within 12 hours unless doing this would cause even greater inconvenience, for example, loud noise from repair at night. However, if the loss of water supply was caused by a leak or burst on one of our major water mains it could take up to 24 hours to put your supply back on.

**If we do not put your supply back on within these times, we will pay you £20 if you are a domestic customer and £50 if you are a business customer.**

**If your water is off for longer than the times mentioned, we will pay you an extra £10 (£25 if you are a business customer) for any further complete periods of 24 hours that your water is off. If you want to make a claim, you should do this within 3 months of the incident.**

### ..in a drought

- **If we have to turn off your water because of emergency drought restrictions, you can claim £20 for each day, or part of a day, your home is without water, and £50 for each day, or part of a day, your business is without water.**

You will not be entitled to a payment if the Director General of Ofwat, the water industry regulator, thinks that we could not have avoided turning off your water. The Director General will decide on any disputes.

You can only claim one payment for each day your water supply is off. The most we will pay in any one year is the average water bill from the year before for homes and the actual water bill from the year before for businesses. **If your business did not pay water charges during the year before, the most we will pay is £500.**

Properties that are used as both homes and businesses will be treated as homes for this standard.



## Water pressure

- We measure water pressure around the region to ensure adequate pressure to each property. However, on occasions, there may be localised pressure problems. If your pressure falls to below 7 metres static head\* at the boundary of your property for more than one hour, and it happens twice in any period of 28 days, you are entitled to £25 from us. If you suspect you fall into this category, please let us know and we will investigate your claim straight away.

\* sufficient pressure for you to fill a 10 litre bucket in one minute.

## Flooding from our mains

- If the inside of your property is flooded because of a problem with one of our water mains, and you let us know, we will give you immediate help. **In addition to offering a full clean-up service we will pay £100 compensation for the inconvenience caused. This payment will be made regardless of whether or not you are covered by insurance.**

## New supply connections

- We will send a quotation for a new water supply connection within 10 working days of receiving your correctly completed application. **If we do not, you will receive £20 compensation.**
- We guarantee to connect your new water supply within 21 days\* of receiving your request, provided that you have paid for it and our installation requirements have been met. **If we do not, you will receive £25 compensation.**

\* please note this is subject to the Local Authority granting permission to excavate the public highway.



## The quality of your water supply

The quality of your tap water has never been better, thanks to considerable investment and improvement programmes.

However, we recognise there are times when you may be concerned about the quality of your water supply and we want to reassure you that we treat your concerns as a priority.

- If you report a serious problem with the quality of your water supply and we arrange to visit your property, we will do so within 4 hours, or later at your request. At the time of the visit we will also provide an alternative supply of water if you need one. **If we do not, we will pay you £20 compensation.**
- We guarantee to take any water samples we need for analysis within 24 hours of you reporting the problem. **If we do not, we will pay you £20 compensation.**
- We will let you know the results of the samples we have taken as soon as they are available. The time it takes for the results to come through depends on the type of tests being carried out.
- Occasionally water supplies may be discoloured. Although this is harmless, it can stain clothes in washing machines. If your laundry is stained by discoloured water, we will provide a free stain remover. **If this approach does not work, we will consider financial compensation.**
- Occasionally, we may have to ask you to boil your tap water before you drink it or use it for cooking. This is normally an extra safety measure when we are carrying out improvements to the water mains. It does not mean there is a problem with the quality of your water. **If we have to ask you to boil your water for more than 48 hours we will consider paying compensation for any inconvenience we may have caused.**
- In the extremely unlikely event that we are convicted of supplying you with water unfit for human consumption, **we will pay you £20 compensation.**

# Sewerage

Modern sewers are designed to protect properties from the risk of flooding. Most have storm overflows to protect our homes and businesses from flooding during severe storms. However, some older parts of the sewerage system are not always able to stand up to very heavy rainfall, and some storms are so severe that flooding cannot be avoided. Sewers can also cause flooding through structural deterioration or if they collapse or become blocked. For an information leaflet please call on **0845 717 1100** (local charge).

## We promise

- If the inside of your property is flooded with sewage from one of our sewers and you let us know, we will send one of our representatives out to inspect the problem. We will try to attend within three hours. Wherever possible, we will also assist you in cleaning up. **Your sewerage charge for the year the flooding happened, will be refunded, or £100, whichever is the greater (up to a maximum of £1,000).**
- If you are unfortunate enough to suffer a repeated incident of flooding from one of our sewers during the year, **we will refund the equivalent amount to your sewerage charge for the year up to a maximum of £1,000, for each incident.**
- If the outside of your property is flooded with sewage from one of our sewers and you let us know, **wherever possible we will assist you in cleaning up and refund 25% of your sewerage charge for the year the flooding happened, up to a maximum of £250.**

- If you experience further external flooding of your property from our sewer during the year **we will again refund 25% of your sewerage charge for the year, up to a maximum of £250, for each incident.**

Please remember that you must let us know that you are affected. As long as we know, following the conclusion of any investigations which may be required, all of these payments are automatic and will be made regardless of whether or not you are covered by insurance.

There are instances when these guarantees do not apply. For instance, if the flooding is caused by your actions (or the actions of a third party), or by any fault or blockage in your own private drains or sewers. Also if flooding occurs as a result of certain exceptional events. Northumbrian Water is only responsible for public sewers. In addition, we are not responsible for private sewers or drains that connect properties to public sewers.

In the majority of cases, if your property or belongings are damaged as a result of the flooding, you should talk to your household insurers.

You can rest assured however that we will offer further advice regarding this and what to do next, at the time of the flooding.

# In all our dealings with you, we promise...

## ..immediate help

If our service is below standard, or our activities cause unreasonable disruption or inconvenience, we will do everything we can to put things right quickly and without fuss. We will honour our responsibilities and commitments to you. We will also offer immediate practical help in exceptional circumstances, for example if your home or garden is flooded from burst water mains or blocked sewers.

## ..no-quibble guarantee

Just occasionally there are circumstances beyond our control, such as freak weather conditions or acts of terrorism, which may prevent us from providing our normal high standard of service. In these circumstances, the guarantees set out in this leaflet will not apply, although we promise to do our best to maintain normal services or to reduce the inconvenience to you.



## ..help in emergencies

There are times when a customer suffers loss or damage because of a water or sewerage problem which is no-one's fault. To help out in circumstances like these, we have set up an emergency fund to which you can apply for help. We consider each application individually. You can get an application form from our Customer Centre.

## ..caring for special needs

We have a computerised register which allows us to provide special services for our customers with special needs. For example if you need a continuous supply of water because of a medical condition, we can provide you with bottled water. This service is free and totally confidential. You can get a form from our Customer Centre or call us to register.

We have specially trained staff who can visit you at home to discuss your special needs. These visits are totally confidential and we can usually arrange to visit you within 48 hours of you asking us to.

You will find details of our Minicom and Language line services on page 2.

Call our Customer Centre  
**0845 717 1100 (local charge).**