NORTHUMBRIAN WATER *living water*

OUR PROMISE TO YOU

www.nwl.co.uk

OUR PROMISE TO YOU

At Northumbrian Water, customer service is at the heart of everything we do. This leaflet details the standards of service we guarantee to provide to you. We must meet certain standards by law, but aim to improve on many of these and include others that we believe demonstrate excellent customer service.

We believe excellent customer service is about getting it right first time and every time. Please get in touch with us if you are unhappy about any part of our service so that we can deal with your concerns.

We will pay you compensation of at least £20 if we fail to meet a service standard. The exact amounts are set out in this booklet and payments will be made automatically, unless we state that they must be claimed. Some claims need to be made in writing, and we say this in the sections where this applies. You can write to us to claim a further £20 within three months of our failure, if we fail to make an automatic payment.

If you are entitled to compensation and are more than six weeks behind with paying your bill, we will use the payment to reduce the amount you owe us, rather than paying the money to you.

PRIORITY SERVICES FOR CUSTOMERS WHO NEED EXTRA CARE

We have a computerised register which allows us to provide special services for our customers who need extra care. For example, if you need a continuous supply of water because of a medical condition, we can provide you with bottled water if there is an interruption to your water supply. We also provide services such as large print bills and operate a password scheme for your peace of mind. These services are free and totally confidential.

You can register with our Customer Centre; we have specially trained advisors who can visit you at home to discuss your needs. These visits are totally confidential and we can usually arrange to visit you within 48 hours of your request.



HOW TO CONTACT US

By telephone:
0345 733 5566* for billing and account enquiries. Monday to Friday from 8.00am until 7.00pm and Saturday from 8.00am until 1.00pm.

0345 717 1100* for general enquiries about water and sewerage services. Monday to Friday, from 8.00am until 8.00pm, and Saturday from 9.00am until 1.00pm.

This number is also available 24 hours for emergencies.

0800 393 084 - Leakline

0800 328 7648 - Floodline

0845 155 0236 - for leisure enquiries (9.00am until 5.00pm, Monday to Friday).

*Calls may be monitored and recorded in order to improve service quality and employee training.

If English is not your first language we offer a free telephone translation service. Let us know which language you require and we will arrange for an interpreter to join the call to assist.

Deaf and hard of hearing customers can contact us using Text Relay – just prefix any of our listed numbers with **18001** and a Text Relay operator will join the call. Alternatively you can let us know the name of someone you trust who has agreed to talk to us on your behalf.

Contact us by email through our website **www.nwl.co.uk**.

In writing:
Northumbrian Water
PO Box 200
Durham
DH1 9WG

The Consumer Council for Water (CCW) - the voice for water consumers represents customers' interests and offers independant advice. It can be contacted at:

CCW,
23, Stephenson Street
Birmingham
B2 4BH

Tel: **0300 034 2222**
Website: **www.ccw.org.uk/contact-us**
Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 8.30am until 5.00pm

DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

When you contact us, all the information you give to us is stored electronically and is kept confidential unless we are required to disclose it by law or to comply with an instruction of a regulator. Your information will only be available to relevant employees and our agents.

PAYING YOUR BILL

If you contact us to tell us you feel your bill is not correct, we will reply within ten working days of the date we receive your enquiry. If we don't do this, we will automatically pay you £40.

If you write and ask us to change the way you pay your bill and we cannot do this, we will reply within five working days of the date we receive your letter. If we don't do this, then we will automatically pay you £40.

We will pay you £50 if we incorrectly issue a County Court claim against you when the Department for Work and Pensions, a debt advice agency, Social Services, or CCW has asked us not to. We will also withdraw the claim. This payment must be claimed in writing.

If we have issued a County Court claim and we have already received a payment from you, we will withdraw the claim immediately and pay you £100. This payment must be claimed in writing.

We will automatically pay you £150 if we either incorrectly obtain a County Court judgment against you or incorrectly register a default against you with a credit reference agency. We will also arrange for the judgment to be set aside and/or the default to be removed from your credit file with any credit reference agency that we have registered the information with. If we incorrectly obtain a County Court judgment against you and also incorrectly register a default against you with a credit reference agency, only one payment will apply.

GETTING IN TOUCH

We take your comments very seriously and we will be in touch, as we prefer to talk to you to try and resolve any concerns as soon as possible. If we can't contact you by telephone, we will send our response in a letter or an email or, if we've been speaking to you online through webchat or social media, we will respond this way if this is your preference.

We always aim to deal with your complaint as quickly as possible and promise to respond within a maximum of 10 working days from the date we receive it. If your complaint is more complex, we will keep you informed as we investigate in more detail. If we fail to meet this standard we promise to automatically pay you £50.

Full details of how we deal with customer complaints can be found in our Code of of Practice on complaints **Getting answers**. You can download a copy from our website at **www.nwl.co.uk** or you can request a copy by calling **0345 717 1100**.

MAKING APPOINTMENTS

In emergency situations, such as flooding at your premises or a disruption to your water or waste water services, we will respond as quickly as possible, as an agreed appointment may not be the best way to help you and could delay how quickly we can resolve the problem.

If we need to make an appointment with you, we will arrange either morning (7.00am until 1.00pm) or afternoon (12.00noon until 6.00pm), or for a two-hour time band if you ask for this. If we fail to do this, we will automatically pay you £40.

If we have made an appointment to visit you, we will give you at least 24 hours notice if we need to change the arrangements. If we do not keep an appointment or do not give you at least 24 hours notice of a change, we will automatically pay you £50.



YOUR WATER METER

We are required to take one actual reading every 13 months starting from 1 October 2025 for all previously existing meters, and counting from date of installation for all new meters.

If we fail this target, we will pay £40 for the first year failed, and £80 if it happens again in the second year, provided we have access to read the meter. If we've written to the customer to request access but they haven't responded then we have not failed the target so compensation would not be due.

Under our free meter installation policy, we will fit your meter within 90 days of receiving your application. If we fail to do this and the delay is our fault, you will pay as if you were metered from the 91st day. This means you will not have to pay more as a result of our delay.

If you have a water meter and tell us your water supply is discoloured because of our work, we may ask you to run the water until it clears. If we do, we will credit your account with the amount equivalent to five cubic metres (5,000 litres or 1,100 gallons). This is equivalent to leaving your tap running for one hour.

LEAKAGE

You are responsible for any leak on your section of pipework. If you have a leak on your external pipework, we will issue a Waste Water Notice. This is a legal notice under the Water Industry Act 1991 and it gives you information about your legal requirement to fix the leak, including timescales. As long as the leak is repaired within the timescale, we will give you a full allowance for the lost water recorded by your water meter.

If you don't fix the problems in the time allowed, we can carry out the works and pass the costs on to you (or to your landlord if you live in a rented property). An allowance will not be granted if you were aware of the leak and didn't repair it or if the leak was due to your negligence. Leakage allowances are only granted to metered domestic properties.

Full details of our policy and the conditions that apply can be found in our Code of Practice on leakage **Dealing with leaks.** You can download a copy from our website at **www.nwl.co.uk** or to request a copy, please call **0345 717 1100**.

WATER QUALITY

We will arrange to visit your property within four hours of your call, or later as agreed with you, if you telephone us to report a serious water quality concern that appears to be causing an illness in your household. We will automatically pay you £30 if we do not arrive within these agreed timescales.

If we take a sample as part of our investigation, we will provide details of the analysis within ten working days and help you compare it to the relevant quality standards.

Please telephone us on **0345 717 1100** if you have a serious water concern, so we can deal with your concern immediately. If you contact us by email, please note our email inbox is not monitored on a 24 hour basis.

Occasionally we may have to ask you to boil water because the quality is lower than the required standard or we are not able to guarantee that standards will be maintained.

In these cases, we will work very quickly to bring the quality of water back up to its normal high standards and then withdraw the notice. This work will usually take up to 48 hours however if it takes 72 hours or more we will consider paying you £20.

Occasionally water supplies may be discoloured. Although this is harmless, it can sometimes stain clothes in washing machines. We appreciate this may cause you problems, should you be using appliances at the time. Please wait until the water is clear and wash the items again. If any of the washing is still discoloured, you may be able to claim a payment to replace the damaged items. Please do not throw the items away as we may need to collect them for valuation.

BLOCKED ACCESS

Sometimes we may need to carry out work in the road or footpath outside your home, and this may restrict access to your property. While this is a necessary aspect of what we do, it may cause you inconvenience.

For domestic customers, if our planned non-emergency work blocks pedestrian or vehicle access to your home, we will always try to let you know before it happens. If we have not, you may claim £20 from us.

This does not apply if:

- We have previously notified you of the date we intend to carry out the works
- The works are unplanned, such as for repairing burst water mains, where we have to respond quickly and do not have the opportunity to notify you in advance.
- Your property is located within the area of a temporary road closure which has been arranged with the permission of the local Highways Authority to allow works to go ahead.
- The obstruction is removed immediately on request by a Northumbrian Water employee or contractor who is on site at the time.

Please note – if you wish to claim, you must do so within three months of the date of the incident.

WATER PRESSURE

If we are aware that the pressure at the boundary of your property has fallen below seven metres static head for more than one hour (sufficient to fill a ten litre bucket in one minute), and it happens twice within a 28 day period, we will pay you £50. This payment is made automatically as long as we know you are affected, and it wasn't caused by necessary work (i.e. fixing a burst water main). If you suspect you fall into this category, please contact us by telephone, email or in writing and we will investigate your claim. We will only make one payment against this service standard during any financial year (April – March).

WATER FLOODING

We will visit you to offer help and advice if you contact us because the main living area of your property is flooded due to a problem with one of our water mains.

As well as offering a clean-up service to domestic customers, we will pay you an amount equal to your full water service charge for the year, or pay you £100, whichever is more (up to a maximum of £1,000). This payment must be claimed and will be made regardless of whether or not you are covered by insurance.

You should always contact your household insurer immediately if you do experience flooding of this nature.

Further information about our responsibilities can be found in Section 209 of The Water Industry Act (1991).

SEWER FLOODING

Internal flooding

Please contact us on **0800 328 7648** immediately if the inside of your property is flooded from one of our sewers. You should also advise your insurer, who will be able to provide advice about cleaning up. We will aim to visit you within two hours, although exceptional weather leading to widespread flooding may mean this is not always possible. In recognition of the distress and inconvenience experienced, if the inside of your property is flooded from one of our sewers, we will pay you an amount equal to your full sewerage charge for the year or £300, whichever is more (up to a maximum of £2,000) for each flooding event that happens providing you inform us within three months of it happening.

External flooding

Please contact us immediately if the outside of your property is flooded from one of our sewers. You should also advise your insurer, who will be able to provide advice about cleaning up.

Wherever possible we will also help you to clean up. We will aim to visit you within four hours, although exceptional weather leading to widespread flooding may mean this is not always possible.

To make sure that customers who suffer external flooding are treated fairly, we will consider the effect that the flooding has had on their property. If your property has been affected by one or more of the following circumstances, a payment will be made:

- Flood water has entered an outbuilding such as a detached garage or a shed.
- Flood water has caused damage to permanent structures such as patios or decking.
- The flooding has restricted access to your property.
- The area affected by the flood water is more than 2 metres by 2 metres (6 feet 6 inches by 6 feet 6 inches).

We will pay you an amount equal to 50% of your sewerage charge for the year or pay you £150, whichever is more (up to a maximum of £1,000) for each flooding event that happens providing you inform us within three months of it happening.

We will pay you an additional £40 (£100 if you are a business customer), if we do not make these payments within 20 working days of being notified of the flooding event. If your property isflooded both internally and externally, the payment for internal flooding will apply. We will automatically make these payments, whether or not you are covered by insurance except in the following circumstances:

- If the flooding is caused by you.
- If the flooding is caused by exceptional rainfall events.*
- If it is impractical for us to determine that you are affected – in which case you must make a claim within three months of the flooding event.
- If our investigations confirm that the flooding was as a result of third party issues e.g. surface water running over land, river inundation, private drainage or highway drainage.

*If your property is on a regulatory internal flooding register at the time of the flooding event, we will make payments even if your property has flooded in exceptional weather conditions.

Emergency Fund
For customers who are experiencing hardship and are unable to obtain household insurance, we have a fund in place to contribute towards damaged house contents. Each application is considered carefully and we do reserve the right to carry out investigations to assess the validity of your application. A payment is also dependent on the flooding being caused by our sewerage network. For more information telephone us on **0345 717 1100**.

KEEPING YOUR WATER FLOWING

During planned maintenance work, we may sometimes need to turn off your water supply. If we turn off the water supply to your property for between one and four hours, we will let you know in writing at least 12 hours beforehand.

If we turn off the water supply to your property for more than four hours, we will let you know in writing at least 48 hours beforehand. We will also let you know when we plan to turn it back on again.

We will turn the water back on at the time we have said, if not before.

We will automatically pay you £20 if you are a domestic customer (£50 if you are a business customer affected by the interruption) if we do not provide the notice set out above or do not turn your water back on within the time we say.

During emergency work, such as 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 and if necessary, we will provide an alternative water supply.

In most emergencies we will turn your water back on within 12 hours unless doing this would cause even greater inconvenience, for example, loud noise from repairs carried out at night. 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 restore your supply.

We will automatically pay you £50 if you are a domestic customer (£100 if you are a business customer affected by the interruption) if we do not turn your water back on within these times.

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 affected by the interruption) for any further complete periods of 24 hours that your water is off. You should receive these payments automatically and if you do not it may be because we did not know you were affected. If you wish to make a claim, you should do this within three months of the incident.

If we are aware of any interruption to your water supply and we do not make a payment within 20 working days, we will automatically pay you an additional £40 (£100 if you are a business customer).

If in any 12 month period (April to March) you experience unplanned interruptions totalling more than 18 hours which do not individually qualify for a payment as stated above, we will automatically pay you £20.

EMERGENCY DROUGHT RESTRICTIONS

We will automatically pay you £20 (£50 for business customers) for each day or part day that your water supply is interrupted or cut off because of emergency drought restrictions unless Ofwat (our regulator) believes it could not be avoided.

We will only make 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 for both homes and businesses will be treated as homes for these standards.

FINDING OUT MORE

This leaflet forms part of our Code of Practice for domestic customers, which provides customers with essential information about our company. Our Code of Practice is approved by Ofwat.

Other leaflets within our **Code of Practice** are available:

- **Dealing with leaks** (our Code of Practice on leakage, guidance on pipe ownership and our repair policy).
- **Getting answers** (our Code of Practice on complaints).
- **Managing debt** (our Code of Practice on debt).
- **Priority Services - can we help you?**
- **Your water meter** (a guide for domestic customers).
- **Getting water to your home.**
- **Our sewerage services.**

To order any Code of Practice leaflet in Braille, large print or CD, please call **0345 717 1100**.

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

IN ALL OUR DEALINGS WITH YOU, WE PROMISE...

We will do everything we can to put things right quickly and without a fuss if our service is below standard, or our actions have caused unreasonable disruption or inconvenience.

Occasionally there are circumstances beyond our control, such as severe weather conditions or the actions of someone outside our organisation*,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 do promise to do our best to maintain normal services or to reduce the inconvenience to you.

*Instances where this might apply:

- Vandalism of our equipment
- Power cut causing an interruption to supply.



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