



# ESP WATER

OUR CUSTOMER CODE OF PRACTICE



Valid for ESP Water 2023-2024

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**ESP**  
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## OUR CUSTOMER CODE OF PRACTICE FOR HOUSEHOLD AND BUSINESS CUSTOMERS

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ESP Water (ESPW) are appointed to provide water and wastewater services granted by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs under the Water Industry Act 1991. We are strictly monitored by several independent regulators who ensure, not only that we comply with the many laws and regulations that govern us, but that your rights are protected.

This is our Code of Practice. It complies with Licence Condition G of our appointment. It sets out our promises to you with the services that we offer as well as your rights as a customer in the regrettable instance that something goes wrong. The Code does not affect your rights as a customer, nor is it a contract between you and us.

This Code is regularly reviewed and updated. All our Codes of Practice are produced in consultation with the industry watchdog, the Consumer Council for Water (CCW) and approved by the Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat). If you have any queries about the Code, please get in touch with us.

## HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

- ☎ 0333 000 0059\* for all **billing enquires (household customers)**. Lines are open Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 5.30pm.
- ☎ 0330 123 4201\* for all **developer services** enquiries. Lines are open Monday to Friday from 8:00am to 5.00pm.
- ☎ 0330 123 4201\* for **all other enquiries and emergencies**. Lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.00am to 5.00pm. This number is also 24 hours for emergencies. You can call this number for a claim form too.

Contact us by email via our website – [www.espwater.co.uk](http://www.espwater.co.uk)

Or on one of the email addresses below:

[generalenquiries@espwater.co.uk](mailto:generalenquiries@espwater.co.uk)

[billing@espwater.co.uk](mailto:billing@espwater.co.uk) (household consumers)

[waterquality@espwater.co.uk](mailto:waterquality@espwater.co.uk)

If you do not have access to the internet, please let us know and we can post any relevant information to you.

Write to us at:

ESP Water  
Bluebird House  
Mole Business Park  
Leatherhead  
KT22 7BA

**If you are a business customer, then please contact your retailer for billing enquiries.**

\*Calls may be monitored and recorded

This Code of Practice along with all our other literature is available in other formats, such as large print or Braille.

## Getting Other Advice

<p><b>Ofwat</b></p> <p>Ofwat is the economic regulator of water services in England and Wales. Essentially Ofwat must ensure that water companies provide household and business customers with an excellent quality service and value for money. Ofwat regulates the charges that we charge our customers.</p>	<p>Ofwat Centre City Tower 7 Hill Street Birmingham B5 4UA</p> <p><a href="http://www.ofwat.gov.uk">www.ofwat.gov.uk</a></p>
<p><b>Drinking Water Inspectorate</b></p> <p>Responsible for regulating our drinking water quality to ensure it complies to the legal standards.</p>	<p>Drinking Water Inspectorate Area 1A Nobel House 17 Smith Square London SW1P 3JR</p> <p>Tel: 0300 068 6400</p> <p><a href="http://www.dwi.gov.uk">www.dwi.gov.uk</a> <a href="mailto:dwi.enquiries@defra.gov.uk">dwi.enquiries@defra.gov.uk</a></p>
<p><b>Environment Agency</b></p> <p>Responsible for protecting and improving the environment in England and Wales.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- River and coastal water pollution</li> <li>- Fisheries</li> <li>- Recreation</li> <li>- Navigation</li> <li>- Water resource management</li> <li>- River management</li> </ul>	<p>Environment Agency Rio House Waterside Drive Aztec West Almondsbury Bristol BS32 4UD</p> <p>General enquiries: 03708 506 506 Floodline: 0345 988 1188 Incident hotline: 0800 807 060</p> <p><a href="http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk">www.environment-agency.gov.uk</a> <a href="mailto:enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk">enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk</a></p>
<p><b>Consumer Council for Water (CCW)</b></p> <p>CCW is the independent industry watchdog that represents the interests for water and sewerage customers in England and Wales. CCW deals with customer complaints against water and sewerage companies and licensed suppliers.</p> <p>You can contact CCW at any point, but they will usually ask that you contact us first to investigate a matter before they begin their own investigations.</p>	<p>CCW c/o 23 Stephenson Street, Birmingham, B2 4BH. Tel: 0300 034 2222</p> <p><a href="http://www.ccwater.org.uk">www.ccwater.org.uk</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.water.org.uk/customers/find-your-supplier">www.water.org.uk/customers/find-your-supplier</a></p>

<p><b>Water Industry Redress Scheme (WATRS)</b></p> <p>WATRS is a voluntary alternative dispute resolution scheme to help address the small number of customer complaints that remain unresolved. WATRS is designed to provide an independent, impartial, and easy-to-use alternative to going to court or a tribunal.</p>	<p>WATRS Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution International Dispute Resolution Centre 70 Fleet Street London EC4Y 1EU</p> <p>Telephone: 0800 008 6909</p> <p><a href="http://www.watrs.org">www.watrs.org</a> <a href="mailto:applications@watrs.org">applications@watrs.org</a></p>
<p><b>Water Regulations UK</b></p> <p>Contributes to the protection of public health by preventing contamination of public water supplies and encouraging the efficient use of water by promoting and facilitating compliance with the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations.</p> <p>Provides advice on approved products and tradespeople.</p>	<p>Water Regs UK Unit 13 Willow Road Pen y Fan Industrial Estate Crumlin Gwent NP11 4EG</p> <p>01495 983010</p> <p><a href="#">Water Regs UK Limited - Home</a></p>

## SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

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ESPW is a private water and wastewater services company, established in 2021. We operate right across the country, providing services within specific areas in place of the regional (known formally as the incumbent) water company. When we apply to do this, we are granted a New Appointment and Variation (NAV) licence. We will be providing these services to you and other areas across the country.

Our licence governs the way we operate our business and controls how we can vary the charges we make to you each year. We are regulated by:

The **Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI)** is a government department set up to ensure we meet the legal standards put in place for drinking water quality.

The **Environment Agency (EA)** ensures that our activities do not negatively impact the environment and that we plan to ensure there are adequate water resources for the future.

**Ofwat** is appointed by the government and is our primary regulator. Its purpose is to ensure that customer interests are protected, and we comply with the conditions of our licence. It controls the changes we can make to our charges and approves the standards of service we must provide. It also provides guidelines for information we provide to our customers, one example being this Code of Practice.

We do not currently own or maintain any water treatment works or wastewater treatment works; we source our high-quality water supplies from the incumbent water company and pass the used wastewater back to them for recycling.

We also work with **CCW**, which is the water industry watchdog. It is the independent voice for all water consumers in England and Wales. CCW also investigate complaints that cannot be resolved by water companies.

If you are a household customer it is important you are aware that we are the supplier of your water and/or wastewater services and not the incumbent water company, as they cannot provide any service or assistance to you. If you are unsure, please check your bill or find your supplier using this link: [www.water.org.uk/customers/find-your-supplier](http://www.water.org.uk/customers/find-your-supplier). If you are a business customer, you should contact your retailer.

### 1.1 Our promises to you

We work to very high levels of customer service and we are constantly aiming to improve these service levels. Under our Guaranteed Standards Scheme we have committed to making specific promises to you in relation to our services. The government sets a minimum standard – the Guarantee Standard Services (GSS); where appropriate we have chosen to enhance these and have introduced additional standards to demonstrate our commitment to providing the best levels of service to you. If we fail on these promises you will be entitled to an automatic or claimable compensation payment.

We have produced a separate Code of Practice document – “Our Customer Promises” – which sets out our minimum service levels to you and, where relevant, the compensation you are entitled to when we do not meet them. This is also included in Section 8. of this document. We have guaranteed standards for the following:

- Making and keeping appointments with you
- Account queries
- Written complaints
- Interruptions to your water supply
- Maintaining minimum water pressure
- Flooding from water mains or from sewers
- Water shortages

- Drinking water quality
- Debt recovery
- Working near your property
- Water meters
- Leakage

You can find out more about our promises, including the payment criteria by viewing the Code on our website or the section later in this document. Or you can call us, and we will send you a free copy in an accessible format.



## SECTION 2 - YOUR WATER SUPPLY

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### 2.1 Quality of your supply

Providing safe, clean drinking water is our absolute top priority. The quality of your water supply is regulated by the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) under the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2016 (as amended 2018) in England and the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2018 in Wales.

To ensure our supplies are of the highest quality we monitor it by taking and analysing samples. Where a sample does not comply with the standards set, we will investigate it and put right the problem as quickly as possible. All analysis results and details of investigations into non-compliant results are reported to the DWI.

To see a water quality report for the water you are supplied with you can visit our website at [www.espwater.co.uk](http://www.espwater.co.uk) or please get in touch with us.

We are immensely proud of the quality of our drinking water, and information about the quality of your water supply is regularly updated and published both on our website. We have leaflets for:

- Discoloured water
- Taste and odour of water
- Cloudy water
- Hardness of water

If you are concerned about your drinking water, you should call our Customer Services Team on 0330 123 4201. We will ask you a few simple questions and will be able to offer practical advice to ease your concern. If you believe your water has become unfit to drink or is making you ill, then please call us straight away on the number above.

Under certain exceptional circumstances we may need to issue customers with one of the following restrictions of use notices as a precautionary measure:

- Do not drink
- Do not use
- Boil water

We will notify you that this has become necessary by post or in person and through press and social media and keep in regular contact with you. We will also endeavour to make arrangements for an alternative water supply to be made available until your normal supply is restored.

For more information about water quality, please visit our website at [www.espwater.co.uk](http://www.espwater.co.uk).

### 2.2 Your water pipework and appliances

You are responsible for the plumbing inside your home or business, and you should ensure that it complies with the [Water Supply \(Water Fittings\) Regulations 1999](#). These regulations are national requirements for the design, installation, composition and maintenance of water fixtures and fittings. All water fittings must comply with these regulations and can be subject to inspection. ESPW has an obligation to enforce these regulations; where we suspect a breach, we have statutory powers to make entry without notice. In most circumstances we will aim to provide at least 24 hours' notice. There is more information on our website [www.espwater.co.uk](http://www.espwater.co.uk) linked to these Regulations.

Or you can find out more about water fittings by contacting the Water Regs UK team at [www.waterregsuk.co.uk](http://www.waterregsuk.co.uk) or Water Regulations Approvals Scheme (WRAS) – [www.wras.co.uk](http://www.wras.co.uk)

Sometimes, we may need to come and take water samples from your home or business and inspect your plumbing system. We will agree a convenient time with you to do this. We will contact you within 48 hours to explain our initial findings and write within 10 working days with a full explanation of the results. If we are concerned about anything unusual, we will be sure to advise you on what precautionary measures you might need to take whilst we investigate.

### 2.3 Water Pressure

Water pressure is the force of water as it comes out of your taps. We aim to supply water at the stop tap on the boundary of your property at a minimum pressure to ensure a minimum flow from a ground-floor tap of 9 litres per minute (or 30 seconds to fill a one-gallon watering can). Please note that this is the pressure on the ground floor and pressure will decrease on upper levels of your property.

The pressure and flow of your water is affected by several factors:

- The height of your property in relation to our water main and relevant service reservoir (the reservoir – often off site – that stores your water prior to it entering our water mains).
- The condition of your private supply pipe.
- If the stop tap is not turned on sufficiently.
- Whether your property shares a supply pipe with any other property.
- Peak demand conditions.

As a result, you may sometimes experience lower pressure.

If we have identified a pressure level at the point where the supply enters your property (the communication pipe) below seven metres static head for at least one hour on two separate occasions within a 28-day period, you are automatically entitled to a compensation payment (please see Section 8. Our Promises to You or our separate document on our website [www.espwater.co.uk](http://www.espwater.co.uk)).

If your water pressure falls substantially below normal, contact us on 0330 123 4201. We will investigate and advise you on any action required.

For more information on water pressure, visit – [www.discoverwater.co.uk/water-pressure](http://www.discoverwater.co.uk/water-pressure)

### 2.4 Quantity of your supply and interruptions

It is our duty to provide you with a constant supply of wholesome water that meets the needs of your household for:

- Drinking
- Heating
- Cooking
- Sanitation
- Washing
- Watering your garden

However, sometimes we may need to restrict or even turn off the supply to carry out essential maintenance. Should we need to do this then we will let you know in advance and tell you when the supply will be restored. In emergency situations this might not be possible. For planned interruptions we aim to restore supplies within four hours and within 12 hours in emergency situations. If your circumstances mean you require extra support in the event of a restriction in supply, we aim to assist where we can (please see our Section 5. Priority Services).

If your supply has been interrupted and we did not contact you to warn you, then please get in touch by calling 0330 123 4201.

### 2.5 Water restrictions

Under normal circumstances we ensure that there is adequate supply to provide a continuous supply of water to all our customers. However, there may be exceptional circumstances, such as a severe drought, where we are unable to maintain an adequate supply of water to our customers.

During a prolonged drought period we may have to restrict the use of hosepipes (temporary use restrictions) to conserve water supplies so that everyone can continue to receive enough for essential purposes. You will usually still be able to water your garden using watering cans and buckets. If we do have to restrict the use of hosepipes, this will apply to all household customers within the affected area.

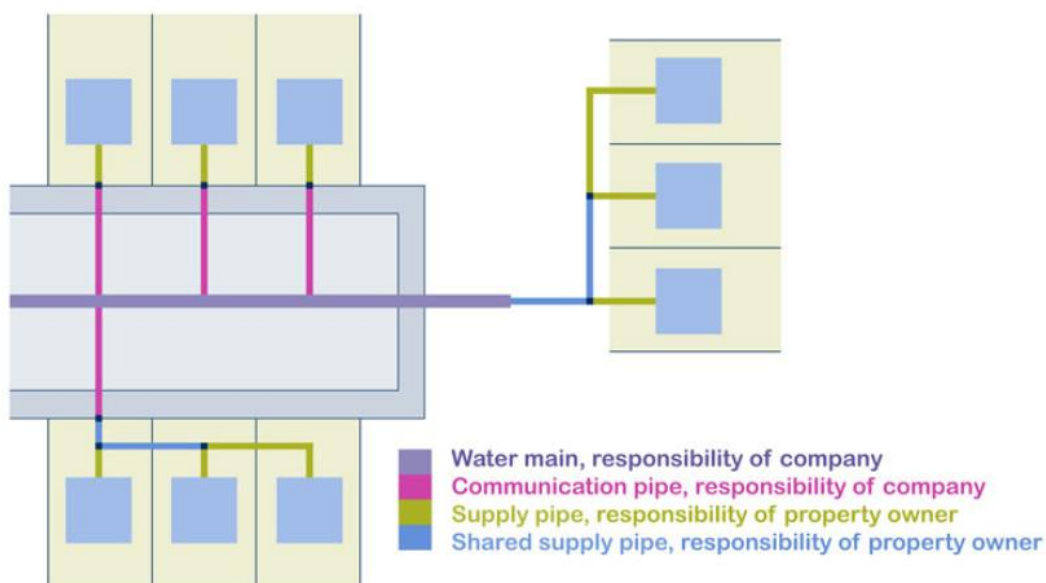
We will ensure that all affected customers are informed about when the restriction is to be imposed, how it will work and when it will be lifted. More information can be found in our Drought plan, which is available on our website at [www.espwater.co.uk](http://www.espwater.co.uk).

## 2.6 Pipe ownership and responsibility

Some key terminology is below:

- We own and maintain the network of water mains which carry water to the homes and businesses in your area.
- Your property is connected to our water main by a pipe known as a 'service pipe.'
- You (or your landlord) are legally responsible for the section of the service pipe from the public highway to your property; the 'supply pipe'. See figure 1.
- We are responsible for the section of pipe between the water main (in the street) and the boundary of your property; the 'communications pipe.' This pipe work usually ends in the footpath outside your property and is where we would install a stop-tap and water meter.
- In some instances, you may share a supply pipe with your neighbour(s), in which case you are all responsible for it.

Figure 1 – Water pipe ownership



You must maintain your supply pipe in good order, even where it runs beneath other properties before reaching yours.

Most properties have a separate stop-tap where the supply pipe enters the building. You are advised to know the location of this stop-tap so that it can be shut off in an emergency. This is particularly important in advance of any planned plumbing works you are undertaking inside your property.

## 2.7 New water service connection

We must connect all new premises to our water mains if you ask us to do so and the supply is required for domestic purposes. All new connections will be metered and charged according to our metered tariffs.

We will provide the connection onto our water main and can also install the communication pipe from the main to the external stop tap, which you are required to pay for. You are not allowed to make the connection onto our main yourself; we must lay any part of your supply pipe which involves digging up the public highway. If you wish to lay a new or altered connection, you should call our Operations Team for information on 0330 123 4201.

Any work carried out on your behalf must be completed by a plumber or contractor approved under the WaterSafe scheme. Approved suppliers are listed on the Water Regs UK website.

We require all new properties to have a separate communication pipe and a water meter. Once we have agreed to provide a new connection and payment has been received, where reasonably practicable we will:

- Make the connection as soon as possible once the supply pipe is laid and within 21 days or;
- If the whole pipe from the property to our water main is already laid, we will make the connection within 14 days of you giving us notice.

If we fail to connect your house within the 14 or 21 days allowed without a valid reason, we may be liable to you for loss or damage caused.

The costs and charges payable for new connections are:

- The cost of making the connection to the main.
- The cost of providing and laying our communication pipe together with a charge for installing a meter.
- An infrastructure charge, which contributes to the cost of local reinforcement to the distribution system. The maximum amount we can charge is fixed by Ofwat and is varied annually in line with the Retail Price Index. It is payable for premises newly connected. A separate infrastructure charge will also be payable for connection to the sewerage system.
- Where the site was previously developed and there has been a supply to the site within the previous 5 years, there may be a credit applied to the infrastructure charges. These credits will be calculated based on the information provided on your application form.
- We reserve the right to charge for inspection visits. Any proposed charge will be discussed with you at the time of application.

Once you have completed an application form for your new connection, we will inspect the site and send you a quotation. The quotation will include useful information telling you what you need to do before we make the connection. This will normally include:

- Ensuring that the necessary permissions are in place from landowners.
- Making sure your supply pipe and internal plumbing comply with the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999.
- Ensuring that laying your part of the service pipe meets our specification.
- Where relevant, providing a separate service pipe to each part of a building that is separately occupied.

We will require evidence that the above has been completed and may require an inspection. If you do not agree with all our requirements, Ofwat has powers to provide support on dispute resolution (see our section on Complaints).

For more information about our requirements and charges and to receive an application form, please call us on 0330 123 4201 or go to our website at [www.espwater.co.uk](http://www.espwater.co.uk). There is a specific charging statement for new connections.

## 2.8 New water mains

As the owner or occupier of your property you can ask us to lay a new water main, or an extension to an existing main. You, and any other applicants, must pay the difference between the income we receive for charges for water supplied for domestic purposes from the main and our reasonable costs in providing the main. You can either pay in full or over a 12-year period. We will require a security deposit from you before beginning the work. We must pay interest on any monies we hold for longer than three months, at a rate set by Ofwat.

We must provide the main within three months of you signing the agreement containing the terms on which we do so.

There are circumstances where your local council may be prepared to request a water main on your behalf.

## 2.9 Self-lay water mains

We will also consider proposals from developers or their agents for the provision of new water mains and services for subsequent management by ourselves. This applies to the design, installation and commissioning of new water mains and services to supply new or existing developments with water.

When considering the proposals, we will seek to agree the most appropriate arrangements, considering statutory responsibilities, those elements of work the developer wishes to undertake directly and any other practical considerations.

Further information can be provided by calling our Operations Team on 0330 123 4201.

## SECTION 3 - YOUR WASTEWATER SERVICES

We may own and operate the public sewers which serve your property. These sewers take wastewater from your drains and carry it to a wastewater treatment works. Our sewer network is designed to ensure it does not flood. We must comply with stringent environmental legislation which is enforced by the Environment Agency (EA) in England.

Your bill should clearly identify the company that provides your wastewater services if it is not ESPW. If you are not sure, please find your supplier using this link: [www.water.org.uk/customers/find-your-supplier](http://www.water.org.uk/customers/find-your-supplier).

### 3.1 Sewers and drains

Wastewater is the waste fluid from your property from domestic appliances, toilets, showers, etc. There can often be confusion over the definition of pipes containing wastewater:

- a **drain** carries wastewater or wastewater and rainfall from a single property.
- a **sewer** is the pipe conveying wastewater or wastewater from two or more drains.

There are various types of sewers:

- Surface water sewers which carry rainwater from roofs and hard standings directly into rivers and the sea.
- Foul sewers which carry lavatory waste and used water from cooking, cleaning and washing to wastewater treatment works.
- Combined sewers which carry both of the above to wastewater treatment works.
- Lateral drains that carry foul wastewater or surface water from the boundary of your property to the main sewer.

### 3.2 Sewers and drains ownership and responsibility

The diagram on the next page illustrates the drains that you are responsible for and the public drains and sewers that we own and maintain.

We are responsible for maintaining all public sewers and lateral drains (the section of a drain that serves only a single property but is outside the boundary of the property). The diagram below shows this.

Most public sewers are situated under roads or public open spaces, however some run through private land – such as gardens or fields – and in such cases, we have a right to access to maintain, repair or replace the sewers. There are also legal measures in place preventing against building over or near a public sewer.

Where we need to lay or maintain pipework in your land, we have a legal right to do so. We have produced a Code of Practice for Pipe Laying, which sets out the landowner's rights and protect your interests. Please contact us for a copy or visit our website at [www.esewater.co.uk](http://www.esewater.co.uk).

You (or your Landlord) are responsible for the repair, maintenance, and replacement of any drains within the property boundary, and which serve your property alone. It is important you understand your obligations; you may wish to obtain a formal condition survey if you are purchasing a property.

If you require a copy of maps of our sewers, or you are unsure about the pipes that you are responsible for, please get in touch with us on 0330 123 4201. You can also contact us to ask for a Drainage and Water search by emailing [generalenquiries@esewater.co.uk](mailto:generalenquiries@esewater.co.uk).

We will clear any blockages in the public sewer network. If we attempt to clear a blockage and we identify that it is in your private drain, we will refer you to a private contractor to clear it at your own expense.



Figure 2 – Sewer and drainpipe ownership

### 3.3 Sewer flooding

We aim to provide adequate capacity in the public sewers we operate, to protect homes and businesses from risk of flooding. However, there can be several reasons why a public sewer becomes overloaded and floods, including because of blockages, collapses, exceptional weather or even vandalism.

Sewer blockages frequently occur because of customers disposing of unsuitable liquids and items into the drains. Avoid flushing the following items down your drains:

- Fat (food, oil and grease solidify as they cool and thus block pipes and sewers)
- Sanitary towels, tampons and applicators, nappies, cotton buds, bandages, plasters, condoms, chemicals, medicines and wet wipes.

For more information, please visit our website at [www.esewater.co.uk](http://www.esewater.co.uk).

In the event of an internal or external flooding incident, you can contact us on 0330 123 4201, 24 hours a day.

You are strongly advised to maintain insurance cover for any losses or damage caused to your property and its contents by flooding.

Flooding from a public sewer is rare and if the flooding enters your property, it can be very unpleasant. We will promptly investigate the cause of sewer flooding following all reported incidents. If wastewater enters your property from our sewer network, we aim to inspect the problem within 4 hours for internal flooding and the same day for external flooding. It is important that you contact us as soon as possible to let us know about flooding. We will provide a clean-up service where possible within 12 hours (internal flooding) or within 24 hours (external flooding). However, if we are experiencing a high number of incidents due to a wider issue with flooding, we may not be able to assist within these timescales.

On occasions you could be entitled to compensation. Please read Our Customer Promises Code of Practice in Section 8 or on our website ([www.esewater.co.uk](http://www.esewater.co.uk)) for further information on our Guaranteed Standards Scheme for sewer flooding. Our compensation will not apply in certain circumstances, and whilst we offer a service to help you clean up after a flooding, we are not liable for damage from flooding.

We are passionate about minimising our impact on the environment. Sewer flooding can occasionally enter and pollute rivers and watercourses. If this occurs, it is vital we act quickly to resolve it, so please call us straightway if you see a potential issue – 0330 123 4201.

### 3.4 New sewer connection

As the owner or occupier of your property, you are entitled to have a drain or private sewer connected to an appropriate public sewer. You must give us notice if you want to do this and you should contact us on 0330 123 4201 or visit our website ([www.espwater.co.uk](http://www.espwater.co.uk)) for a sewer connection application form, which details the procedure to be followed:

- The construction details must be in accordance with the specification sent with the application form.
- Once we have received your notice, we will tell you within 21 days if your proposals are acceptable.
- We may choose to carry out the connection works ourselves. Should we wish to pursue this option we will tell you within 14 days of receipt of the completed application form.
- If we are not making the connection ourselves, upon receipt of our approval you should give us at least 48 hours' notice of your intention to commence works.
- Any person making an illegal connection into a public sewer is committing an offence and may be liable to a fine. Also, we can disconnect the drain or sewer and recover our costs of doing so.
- If we find a sewer has been wrongly connected, e.g., a foul water drain connected to a surface water sewer, we will require it to be remedied immediately or disconnected.
- It is also illegal to connect land drains, draining unsurfaced areas, to the public sewers as this can cause flooding to other properties.

The costs and charges payable for new sewer connections are linked to the following:

- If we make the connection ourselves, the estimated cost payable in advance.
- If we agree to you making the connection, our costs for administration and approval of your proposal, payable in advance.
- An infrastructure charge, which contributes to the cost of providing sewerage systems. The maximum amount we can charge is fixed by our licence and is varied annually in line with the Retail Price Index. It is payable for each of the premises newly connected.
- If the site was previously developed and there has been a sewer connection to the site within the previous five years, there may be a credit applied to the infrastructure charges. These credits will be calculated based on the information provided on the application form.
- We reserve the right to charge for inspection visits. Any proposed charge will be discussed with you at the time of application.

### 3.5 New sewers

As the owner or occupier of your property you can ask to lay a new public sewer, or an extension to an existing public sewer. You, and any other applicants, must pay the difference between the income we receive for charges for water supplied for domestic purposes from the main and our reasonable costs in providing the sewer. All charges must be paid upfront.

We will usually provide the sewer within six months, or a longer period may be agreed, of you signing the agreement containing the terms on which we do so.

### 3.6 Building work near public sewers

If you are building over or close to our public sewers, we will need to know so that we can take steps to protect them.

Building close to or over a public sewer without getting our formal approval is illegal and it may also jeopardise the future sale of your property. We must make sure that development is not



carried out that could damage a public sewer, cause risk of flooding or restrict our access for maintenance.

Wherever possible we prefer to avoid the need to build over or close to a sewer by repositioning the proposed development or diverting the sewer. "Close to" is normally defined as being within three metres of the sewer.

However, there are some cases where the risk to the public sewer is small and where diversion is not possible, that we can allow building over or close to a sewer. Please contact us on 0330 123 4201 if you are considering any building work in order that we can check whether the proposed work affects the public sewer.

## SECTION 4 - CHARGES, BILLS & METERS

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Charges for water and wastewater services are strictly controlled by Ofwat. We publish a guide each year detailing our services to you and our charges. You can find details of all our current charges on our website or alternatively you can contact our Billing Team on 0333 000 0059. **If you are a business customer, then you will pay your water bill via your retailer.**

The amounts that you pay will depend on the area in which you live. **You will not pay more for our services than you would have paid if your services had been provided by the regional water company in whose area you live.**

Your charges are normally calculated on a metered basis, where you pay for actual volume of water you use. All the properties we supply are fitted with a meter.

Where you are the occupier of the property you are responsible for paying the bill, even if you are a tenant (see below). If more than one person shares the property, everyone is responsible, even if the bill is only in one name. If you need help paying your bill, please see Section 4.7 of this document.

### 4.1 If you are a private tenant

Unless we have a written agreement from your landlord accepting responsibility for payment of our charges, as the tenant you must pay the bills. If you believe the responsibility for bills rests with the landlord and is within your tenancy agreement, you will need to ask your landlord to contact us to arrange payment. If the landlord does not pay, you remain liable for the charges and must pay the bill.

If you experience a leak on your supply pipe and live in a property where your landlord is a management company, housing association or is council owned, it may be your landlord's responsibility to carry out any repairs. Please contact them immediately if you suspect a problem. Please also let us know, as we may be able to help you with the bill.

### 4.2 Charges for customers with meters

All properties built since 1990 will have a meter fitted. If you have a water meter, we charge you for:

- The amount of water used, recorded by your meter.
- Wastewater recycling. If we provide your wastewater services as well, these charges are usually based on between 90% and 100% of your metered water usage.
- A fixed water charge, which covers the cost of reading and maintaining the meter.
- A fixed wastewater charge for disposing of wastewater and any surface drainage from your property.

We will send your bill every 6 months based on an actual meter reading, taken whenever we can. If we need to send you an estimated bill, we will adjust your bill when the meter is next read. If safe to do so, you can read your own meter and let us know your meter reading by calling us on 0333 000 0059. We will then send you an updated bill. We are deploying meters with Automated Meter Reading (AMR) technology, which do not require manual reading, so we do not anticipate having to estimate your bill.

No usage charges will apply to properties that are un-occupied and not using water, but standing charges will still apply. These charges will continue to accrue unless a specific request has been submitted to us to turn off your supply.

If your property is not connected to a surface water drain, we will not charge you for this element of your fixed wastewater charge. If you believe you are being incorrectly charged, then please contact the Billing Team on 0333 000 0059 and we will investigate it.

### 4.3 Your water meter

When water pipes were initially laid to supply water to your property, we would normally have positioned a meter in a below ground meter chamber/box in the path at the end of your garden or driveway. However, the meter may alternatively at one of the following locations:

In a box on an outside wall

Inside your home or business under the kitchen sink.

If the meter is inside your home or business premises, it will normally be fitted on the water pipe as it enters your home or business (usually near to the stop-tap).

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

If you do not think your meter is working properly, please contact our Billing Team on 0333 000 0059. If you are a business customer, please contact your retailer in the first instance. Their number should be on your bill. The meter will be tested where it is and if necessary, be removed and replaced within 40 days. There will not be a charge for the test if the meter is found to be faulty. If you disagree with the results of the initial test, then you can request for the meter to be removed and sent off for independent testing. You will be liable for the cost of the test, up to a maximum of £70 + VAT, which will be refunded if the meter is found to be faulty. We will also provide a charges adjustment to reflect the correct level of consumption where a meter is over recording, backdated to when this started, or if this date is not known, from six months prior to the date of the last reading taken by ourselves.

All our new meters are fitted with Automated Meter Reading (AMR), so do not have to be read manually, although there is a dial visible on the meter for you to view readings should you wish to. If you are registered with our Priority Services we can provide, free of charge, an in-home meter reading module. Please see our Section on Priority Services for further details.

Your meter is the property of ESPW and it is a criminal offence to tamper with or remove it.

### 4.4 Unexplained high bill – Leakage

If you receive a higher-than-normal bill from us, it is likely to be because your meter reading is higher than usual, which could mean you have a leak within your home or business, or on your buried supply pipe that connects our meter to your home or business. You are responsible for repairing any leakage on your supply pipe and inside your property unless the Incumbent offers this free of charge. Either way, we can offer you useful advice on repairing such leaks so please get in touch or see Section 7. Leakage.

If you have had a leak which led to you receiving a high bill, you may be entitled to a leakage allowance. Details of how leaks are dealt with and how the leakage allowance works are contained in our Code of Practice on Leakage, which can be downloaded from our website or is available in Section 7. of this document.

### 4.5 Paying your bill (Household customers only)

We will bill you twice a year for your water and/or wastewater services. It is your responsibility to check your bills. Please get in touch with any queries.

The full balance will be due within 10 working days of you receiving your bill. We can arrange for you to pay your bills in monthly instalments. To arrange payment dates and methods, please call us on 0333 000 0059 or email [billing@esewater.co.uk](mailto:billing@esewater.co.uk) and we can discuss your

circumstances to agree a suitable schedule. Conditions may differ according to the option you choose; we will explain all of this to you. If a payment arrangement is set up, you must keep to the agreement. If you break the agreement, the whole debt becomes due.

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

- **Direct debit**

Contact us on 0333 000 059 or email [billing@eswater.co.uk](mailto:billing@eswater.co.uk) to set up a Direct Debit, which is the simplest and most convenient method. We will send you a form to complete. It is safe, easy to arrange and we offer a choice of payment dates.

- **Debit or credit card**

Call our Billing Team on 0333 000 059.

- **Home or telephone banking**

You will need:

- Our bank account number 22591168
- Sort code 30-80-12

Please use your ESPW account number as the payment reference. We can then tell that you have paid.

- **Post**

Cheque made payable to ESP Water Ltd, write your account number on the back and send to:

ESP Water  
Rocfort Road  
Snodland  
Kent  
ME6 5AH

#### 4.6 Queries about your bill

If you suspect your bill is wrong, or you do not believe you are liable to pay it, please tell us straight away. Call us on 0333 000 0059 or email [billing@eswater.co.uk](mailto:billing@eswater.co.uk) so that we may try to resolve the matter. We will temporarily stop any recovery action where an account query cannot be resolved immediately. If you are a business customer, please contact your retailer.

If you are not happy with our decision, our complaints procedure will be followed. You are also entitled to refer your complaint to CCW. See section 9. for more information about complaints.

#### 4.7 Getting help with your bill

We want to help you if you are facing genuine financial hardship. Water and wastewater services must be paid for so it is important you get in touch with us soon as you can and let us work with you to put the appropriate level of support in place to help you pay. You can call us confidentially on 0333 000 0059. As well as the specific schemes listed below, we are more than happy to discuss setting up a flexible personal process with you. If you are a business customer, please contact your retailer for support.

#### 4.8 WaterDirect scheme

If you are a household customer and in receipt of benefits, and you have an arrears of at least £50 with us, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) may agree to a deduction being taken from your benefit and paid directly to us. You are eligible for WaterDirect if you are receiving:

- Employment & Support Allowance (ESA)
- Job Seekers Allowance
- Income Support
- Pension Credit

- Universal Credit

You can either call us directly on 0333 000 0059 and in confidence to discuss your circumstances and we will make an application on your behalf, or you can contact DWP directly to discuss eligibility and apply – 0800 882200 or visit their [website](#).

#### 4.9 WaterSure scheme

WaterSure provides a reduction in charges in your bills, provided you satisfy the qualifying criteria:

- You are, or someone in your household is receiving one of the following benefits:
  - Child Tax Credit (but not if you receive only the family element).
  - Working Families Tax Credit.
  - Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance.
  - Housing Benefit.
  - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance.
  - Income Support.
  - Pension Credit.
  - Universal Credit.
- You have a water meter fitted.
- You are receiving child benefit for three or more children under 19 in full-time education.
- Either you, your child, or another member of your household suffers from a medical condition that requires significant additional use of water.

Please contact us to discuss the WaterSure scheme and request an application form, on 0333 000 059, or you can download a copy from our website at [www.espwater.co.uk](http://www.espwater.co.uk).

#### 4.10 What if you do not pay?

If you do not pay your bill or keep to a payment arrangement, we have agreed with you, we will take the following actions if you are a household customer:

1. We will send you a Final Notice giving you a minimum of 10 days to pay the outstanding amount. Alternatively, if you do not make payments in accordance with an agreed instalment arrangement, a withdrawal of instalments warning letter will be sent to you requesting that any unpaid instalments are paid within seven days. If we do not receive the outstanding payments, we will cancel the instalment plan and the total outstanding balance will then be due in full.
2. If you do not pay or contact us to agree a payment arrangement, we will send you a notification of intention to file a default, which is a record of non-payment, on your customer credit file. The notice will explain that if you fail to pay the amount owing to us within 28 days of receipt, we will be entitled to register a default against your customer credit file with credit reference agencies. This will make it more difficult for you to obtain credit in the future and the default of the payment could stay on your credit file for six years.
3. If you still do not pay or contact us, we may ask an independent debt collection agency to recover the amount owing. This may result in additional charges being added to your account. You will be advised if we choose to take this action. Alternatively, we will send you a Letter before legal action which explains the action we will take if payment or contact is not received within 14 days. This letter will also notify you that a compensatory charge of £39 (inc. VAT) would be added to your account in the event a referral is made. We will waive this compensatory charge if we are satisfied that there is or has been genuine hardship.
4. If you fail to pay or contact us, we will issue a county court claim to recover our charges. You will have to pay the fee for the issue of the claim and our solicitor's costs. In addition, if debt recovery proceedings are issued through the court, we will apply to the court for

interest to be added from the date payment was due to be paid at the standard County Court rate.

#### 4.11 Other independent advice

There are a few independent advice agencies that you can contact if you are worried about household bills and debt. Please let us know if any of these organisations are advising you and we will hold any debt recovery process for up to 30 days.

##### **Citizens Advice**

Citizens Advice is an independent charity, which provides free, confidential and impartial advice on a wide range of problems. Expert advisers can help you with your debts and are able to negotiate repayment plans with your creditors. If you have other problems, such as illness, redundancy or divorce, the adviser may be able to help or tell you where you can get further advice. To find your nearest Citizens Advice visit [citizensadvice.org.uk](https://citizensadvice.org.uk).

##### **Step Change**

Step Change help people to manage their debts, offering tailored advice and practical solutions. The advice they provide is effective, confidential, and free. For further details, call: 0800 138 1111 or visit [stepchange.org](https://stepchange.org).

##### **National Debt line**

National Debt line is a helpline for people with debt problems. The service is free, confidential, and independent and advisers can assist with drawing up a personal budget and negotiating with creditors. For further details call: 0808 808 4000 or visit [nationaldebtline.co.uk](https://nationaldebtline.co.uk).

#### 4.12 Moving Home

If you are moving home, please let us know as soon as possible. We require at least five working days' notice by telephone or 10 working days' notice by letter to enable a meter reading to be taken to produce a final bill. Alternatively, you can provide us with your meter reading.

We need at least 2 working days advance notice of you moving out so we may read your meter on the day of your move, otherwise you could remain liable for the charges until the first of the following dates:

- 28 days after we have been notified: or
- the date when the meter would normally have been read next; or
- the date when we are notified by someone else that they have become the occupier.

Should you require a water or sewerage supply to be disconnected, you must give us 14 working days' notice.

If you are a business customer, please contact your retailer to let them know you are moving.

**Please remember, if your sewerage services are provided by another water company, you will also need to inform them. You can find this information on your bill or contact us if you need their details.**

## SECTION 5 – PRIORITY SERVICES

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We are committed to providing you with the highest standards of service. For those with additional needs we offer our Priority Services for household customers. You will be added to our Priority Services Register (PSR). Whether you are elderly, have a disability or significant health condition, we can offer a range of services to meet your needs if you:

- Have physical disabilities,
- Have mental health conditions,
- Have dementia,
- Have chronic or serious illness,
- Are deaf or hard of hearing,
- Need dialysis,
- Have developmental conditions,
- Have a speech impairment,
- Who are blind or partially sighted,
- Unable to answer the door,
- Have restricted hand movement,
- Unable to communicate in English or,
- Of pensionable age over 65.

You can also sign up if your temporary situation means you need additional help. These include:

- families with young children below the age of 5,
- temporary life changes such as bereavement or separation,
- post hospital recovery or,
- a young adult less than 18 who is paying the bills.

It is important to us that we can offer you the right level of support, so let us know if your needs change throughout the year. Our team are trained in dealing with a wide range of needs. If you, or your care giver, would like to register for our Priority Services, please contact us in confidence:

- **By phone**  
0333 000 0059, Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 5.30pm.
- **By email**  
[Generalenquiries@eswater.co.uk](mailto:Generalenquiries@eswater.co.uk)
- **By Post**  
ESP Water  
Rocfort Road  
Snodland  
Kent  
ME6 5AH

Once registered with us for priority services you can:

- Receive warning of planned work which may interrupt your water supply,
- Receive priority treatment should your water supply be interrupted (we aim to arrange an alternative source as quickly as possible, and will often hand-deliver bottled drinking water to our customers with mobility issues),
- Receive essential information in a more convenient format, such as large print or the spoken word, where our normal presentation style is not suitable,
- Register your own spoken or written password for our staff to use so that customers can identify them if we need to call at your home,
- Nominate somebody else to receive your water bill on your behalf, or someone we should contact if it remains unpaid (the person you nominate must agree to this),

- Receive easy-to-read, large print bills (we can also arrange to call you and read your bill to you),
- If English isn't your first language, we may be able to help you with our interpretation service when you call,
- Receive information about specialist organisations which can provide advice on possible adaptations to water fittings and appliances around the home.

You can visit our website to learn more about our Priority Services – [www.espwater.co.uk](http://www.espwater.co.uk).

We are proud of the service we provide to all our household customers, however if you have any comments or suggestions about any part of what we offer please get in touch and let us know.

If we fail to respond to your enquiry within 5 working days about the PSR then you are entitled to compensation. Please see section 8. of this document.



## SECTION 6 – OUR RIGHTS OF ENTRY

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We have legal powers that enable to us to enter private property and land to investigate compliance with the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 or to take samples to check water quality.

For regulatory purposes or sampling we are not able to make an appointment, however, in all other cases, we will always try to make an appointment and give reasonable notice.

### 6.1 Bogus callers

We want to make sure your safety and wellbeing is not affected by us visiting you, so we have taken steps to help the fight against bogus callers. If a member of our team calls at your property, do the following:

- If you have a door chain, ensure it is attached
- Ask for identification (ID). All our team carry ID
- Look for uniform or a vehicle displaying a logo
- If you are unsure, make them wait and call us on 0330 123 4201, 24 hours a day
- If we cannot verify the caller, we will call the Police and stay in touch with you until they arrive
- Our staff will always be happy to wait
- If you have been given one, ask for the dedicated password (see Priority Services, section 5.)

## SECTION 7 - LEAKAGE

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Water is a vital resource that is sadly becoming scarcer due to changes in climatic patterns and our demands for it. Promoting the efficient use of the water supply is important to us, so we must act when we are aware it is being wasted, which includes the prompt detection and repair of any leaks from our water network.

### 7.1 Responsibility for leaks

We are responsible for promptly fixing all leaks on the water pipes and fittings we own, which includes the outside stop tap, located at the boundary of your property, and water meter (where one is fitted). We showed earlier in Section 2.6 and in Figure 1 the external buried pipework that you (or your landlord) are legally responsible for, as well as all internal pipework and fittings. Similarly, you are also responsible for ensuring that this pipework does not leak and for putting right any leaks that do occur. Leaks can worsen over time and, despite the obvious wastage of water, can cause extensive and costly damage to property. Dealing promptly with any leak you might have is therefore cost effective.

It is worth noting that, if your property is a long way from the water main, you are responsible for the entire length of the water service pipe, even if it crosses someone else's property. Please contact us if you are unsure about pipe ownership.

### 7.2 Spotting a leak

If you find a leak in a road, pavement, or public place, please help us by reporting it without delay to 0330 123 4201, our 24-hour helpline number.

We may identify a customer leak whilst conducting our operational activities. If we spot one at your property, we will ensure we notify you without delay. We can offer free advice about fixing leaks on your supply pipe if you contact us.

Water leaks can occur both inside the home or business and outside on your water supply pipe due to the following:

- Faulty pipework and fittings.
- The effect of freezing or very dry weather.
- Damage caused over time by water or soil surrounding the pipe, known as corrosion.
- Gaps forming between sections where pipes join.
- Damage from traffic vibrations or construction activity.

You may have a leak within your property if you notice any of the following signs:

- Higher than usual meter readings.
- Damp patches around your property.
- Areas in your garden where plants or grass continue to grow through a dry spell.
- Loss of water pressure.
- The sound of running water in your property when none is being used.

If we identify a potential leak when we read your meter, we will let you know as soon as we can.

If you suspect a leak:

1. Ensure all taps are turned off and no cisterns are filling.
2. Read your meter (located outside your property, normally in the pavement).
3. Wait 30 minutes, using no water, and read your meter again.
4. If the readings are different or you can visibly see the numbers on the meter turning, then you may have a leak.
5. We will help investigate it with you if you report any leak to us.
6. If you are a business customer also report it to your retailer.

### 7.3 Fixing Leaks

We will repair or replace all pipes that are our responsibility but please do contact us if you are not sure who owns a pipe with a leak so that we can avoid a delay in repair.

Fixing a leaking water supply pipe on your property is usually your responsibility. We recommend you respond quickly as there could be a risk of damage to your, or someone else's property. We suggest you call an approved plumber in the first instance such as a member of the Water Industry Approved Plumber Scheme such as WaterSafe. Visit [wras.co.uk/wiaps](https://www.wras.co.uk/wiaps) for more details.

If you are the property owner, you are also responsible for all internal water fixtures and fittings, so must ensure any leaks are swiftly fixed. Under Section 73 of the Water Industry Act 1991, it is an offence to intentionally waste the water supplied by us. The maximum penalty is £1,000. If you need assistance in repairing a leak on your pipework or fixtures and fittings, please contact us on our 24-helpline number 0330 123 4201 for advice.

### Leak Allowance

If you have a water meter it will record all leakage as well as the actual water you use. In special circumstances we will give a leakage allowance on your water bill. You will be eligible for this if:

- The supply pipe has been repaired
- The leak was repaired within six weeks (30 days) of being identified and confirmed
- You make the claim within three months of the repair
- The leak was not caused by neglect
- You have not been served by a Section 75 notice from us

Note: if you do not meet these criteria, we will still consider you leak allowance.

A leak allowance can only be provided once for internal leaks, but at any time on for a supply pipe leak.

If you have a water meter, we will compare how much you have used whilst you had the leak against a comparable period in the past. We will credit your water and wastewater services account with the difference in cost; this is the allowance amount. If we do not provide your wastewater services, we will let the other company know so they credit your wastewater allowance. The allowance can be backdated to a maximum of two years.

Where we do not have past information on your usage, we will base the allowance on a typical house of similar size and number of occupants.

If you disagree with our leak allowance assessment once we have adjusted the bill, please let us know. We will review the allowance and let you know the outcome.

To apply for a leak allowance, please call us on 0330 123 4201. If you are a business customer, please contact your retailer initially.

### 7.4 Preventing winter pipe bursts

We recommend the following tips to ensure your heating system and water pipework and fittings are protected during the winter months:

- Ensure any dripping taps are fixed
- Insulate any pipes and fittings in cold or draughty spaces with lagging – this could include external buildings and loft spaces
- Cover tanks and cisterns with lagging
- Make sure your heating always operates by running it at a minimum setting or installing a Frost-Stat

- Leave the heating on when you are away. Alternatively isolate the system and drain it down
- Drain down anything you do not intend to use over the winter. Isolate external taps at the stop cock

## SECTION 8 - OUR PROMISES TO YOU

We always want to give you the absolute best service possible, and we work hard to ensure that all our customers receive a consistently high level of service, monitoring our performance very carefully.

Our promises to you, outlined below, set out our customer service standards, which include all the minimum standards set out in the government standards scheme (GSS) regulations and enhancements where we can offer them. **Payments are for both households and businesses unless otherwise stated.**

It also sets out several specific circumstances where you may be entitled to receive a payment if we fail to meet the standards we promise. If you have been adversely affected because of our service failure, please let us know what you believe your losses to be, and we will investigate it for you.

**If we fail to achieve the standards outlined in 8.1 to 8.3 below, we will credit your account with a payment that is equivalent to that offered by the upstream water company for your area.**

### 8.1 Appointments

- When we make an appointment to visit you, we will offer you either a morning (before 12pm) or afternoon appointment, or you can request an appointment within a two-hour duration.
- If we must change the appointment, we will give you 24 hours' notice.

If we fail to meet these standards, we will credit your account. Payments will be made within 10 working days. If we fail to make a payment within this time, you are entitled to a penalty payment equivalent to the upstream water company for the area.

### 8.2 Account queries

- We will reply to any written enquiry about your bill within 10 working days of receipt.
- If you ask for a change to your payment arrangement, (for example to pay by instalments) and we are unable to agree to the request, we will reply and tell you the reason why within five working days of receipt.

If we fail to meet these standards, we will credit your account. Payments will be made within 10 working days. If we fail to make a payment within this time, you are entitled to a penalty payment.

### 8.3 Written complaints

- We will respond to all written complaints within 5 working days of receipt.

If we fail to meet these standards, we will credit your account. Payments will be made within 10 working days. If we fail to make a payment within this time, you are entitled to a penalty payment.

### 8.4 Interruptions to supply

- Occasionally we need to turn off the water supply to carry out essential, planned work. We will let you know in advance and tell you when the supply will be restored.
- For planned interruptions of more than four hours, we will give you at least 48 hours' notice in writing. We will restore the supply by the time stated in the notice.
- After an emergency or unplanned interruption, we will restore supplies within 12 hours for most bursts. If necessary, we will give you an alternative supply.

If we fail to meet any of these standards, we will automatically credit £30 (households) and £75 (planned) or £50 (unplanned) (businesses) to your account and a further £30 or £75 respectively for every additional 12 hours that you remain without water. Payments will be made within 20 working days. If we fail to make a payment within this time, we will pay you a further £25

(Households) or £50 (Businesses). **Should the upstream water company offer a higher payment then we will credit your account with the equivalent value.**

It is sometimes difficult to know who has been affected by these interruptions. If you were affected and we have not credited your account, please call our 24-hour query number within 3 months of the emergency or unplanned interruption.

### 8.5 Water pressure

- If your water pressure falls substantially below normal, please let us know. We will first check whether this is due to an operational fault for example a burst main. If not, then we will carry out further checks with pressure loggers.
- If we have identified a pressure level in the communication pipe below seven metres static head for at least one hour on two separate occasions within a 28-day period, you are automatically entitled to a £30 payment. This can only be made once in a 12-month period.
- If significantly high-water pressure causes any damage to your water fittings because of our negligence, we will pay for the cost of any repairs to these fittings.

It is sometimes difficult to know who has been affected by low pressure. If you were affected and we have not credited your account, please call us within three months of the last of the two occasions of low pressure. **Should the upstream water company offer a higher payment then we will credit your account with the equivalent value.**

### 8.6 Sewer flooding

Regrettably, on rare occasions, certain conditions can cause overflowing and flooding from sewers.

- If sewage, from one of our networks has entered your property internally please call us straight away and we will attend within 4 hours and resolve the issue within 12 hours.
- If flooding from the public sewer affects your property internally, we will automatically pay you an amount equivalent to your annual sewerage charges for each internal flooding incident or a minimum of £150, up to a maximum of £1,000 per incident.
- You should have insurance to cover any damage caused by sewer flooding of your home. But, if such a flood occurs because of our negligence, we will also consider any additional expense, including uninsured losses. These claims can be made up to 12 months after the event.
- If a member of your household suffers from a pre-existing health condition at the time that your property becomes flooded with sewage and you arrange to move into temporary alternative accommodation, we will consider making a discretionary payment of up to £50 per day towards your costs. The maximum for this compensation is £500.
- If flooding from the public sewer materially affects your property externally, you may be entitled to claim a payment equal to 50 per cent of your annual sewerage charges for each incident from a minimum of £75, up to a maximum of £500.

Please note that you are not entitled to a payment for both internal and external sewer flooding for the same incident. Payments will be made within 20 working days. If we fail to make a payment within this time, we will pay you a further £20 if you are a household and £50 if you are a business. Please call us to make a claim.

It is sometimes difficult to know who has been affected by sewer flooding. If you have been affected and we have not credited your account, please make a claim within three months of the incident.

You will not be entitled to a payment if the sewer internal or external flooding is caused by one or more of the following:

- Exceptional weather
- Industrial action by our employees
- An action by you
- A defect, inadequacy or blockage in your drain or sewer.

### 8.7 Flooding from water mains

- If the inside of your property becomes flooded because of a burst water main on our network which is not your fault, contact us immediately and we will provide a specialist clean up and drying service free of charge.
- We will also consider your claim for uninsured losses and other out of pocket expenses if you contact us promptly at the time of the flooding.

### 8.8 Drinking water quality

- If we believe there is a problem with the quality of your tap water due to our water supply system, we will provide you with appropriate advice on what to do and with an alternative water supply where we think necessary.
- On rare occasions and as a precautionary measure this advice may be in the form of a “Do not use,” “Do not drink” or “Boil water” Notice. If we issue you with a “Boil Water” Notice or a “Do not drink” notice, we will consider compensation.
- If you tell us, you are unhappy with the taste or smell of your water, we will contact you by the next working day to investigate. Please note that all our tap water contains chlorine, which helps to keep the water safe to drink – it is therefore normal for your tap water to have a slight chlorine taste or smell. There is more information about water quality on our website.
- If you report a water quality problem which we consider could have an impact on the safety of your water supply, we will contact you within two hours and visit you within four hours (if it is convenient with you); and arrange for an alternative supply, if necessary.
- In this circumstance, if we take a sample of water for analysis at our laboratory, we will give you an explanation of the key results by phone within 48 hours if you request it, and confirm the key results in writing, within 10 working days. Please note that this does not apply if we tell you the analysis will take more than 48 hours.

If we fail to meet these standards when you report a water quality query to us, we will automatically credit £25 to your account within 10 days. If we fail to make a payment within this time, we will pay you a further £20. **Should the upstream water company offer a higher payment then we will credit your account with the equivalent value.**

- Very occasionally water can become discoloured a reddish-brown colour and can cause staining of laundry. If this occurs, please contact us so that we can arrange to visit your property and investigate for you.

### 8.9 Water shortages

- If we must interrupt or cut off your supply because of a Drought Order, we will automatically pay you £15 (Households) or £55 (Businesses) for each day, or part day, that your water supply is interrupted. This is up to a maximum of the average household water bill from the previous year. **Should the upstream water company offer a higher payment then we will credit your account with the equivalent value.**

### 8.10 Leakage

- We will repair any major leaks on our water mains that have been reported by customers within 5 working days or minor bursts reported on our system within 10 working days.
- Leaks on private water supply pipes are the responsibility of the homeowner or business owner / landlord to get repaired.

We will consider a one-off claim for a leakage allowance from customers with a metered supply provided that the leak is repaired within 30 days of it being confirmed by us.

### 8.11 Water Meters

- We will aim to read your meter at least once a year, however if we cannot gain access, we will estimate your water usage or we will accept your own reading if you provide it.
- For those of our customers with additional needs, who are having difficulty reading their meter we will provide a Customer In-Home Display unit. If this is not possible and you would like your meter relocated, we will carry out a free survey. If it is possible to move your water meter, we will move it free. If we are unable to move it, we will let you know why.

### 8.12 Working near your property

If we are planning to work in your street and must restrict access to your property, we will contact you to let you know about our plans in advance. If we fail to do so you can claim a credit payment of £10 by contacting us. Claims must be made within three months of the restriction.

### 8.13 Priority Services Register

We will respond to all queries concerning our priority services register within 5 working days of the query being made. If we fail to meet this standard, we will pay compensation of £25. If we fail to make a payment within 10 working days, then we will pay a further £15

### 8.14 Debt recovery action

- Where we have issued a County Court claim/ judgment in error, we will withdraw the claim and write to you with confirmation. We will consider making a compensation payment which is proportionate to the level of loss or inconvenience caused to the customer because of our error.
- Where we have requested Credit Reference Agencies (CRA's) to publish a default for non-payment on a customer's credit file (or a payment status that indicates a customer is in arrears) and it is due to an error on our part, we will withdraw the record from the CRA's, write to you with confirmation and credit your account £25.
- We will consider making a compensation payment where a customer has demonstrated in writing that they have been unfairly prejudiced because of the error and suffered financial loss. Each case will be assessed by us and we will consider making a payment which is proportionate to the level of loss or inconvenience caused to the customer because of our error.

### 8.15 Exceptional circumstances

In certain circumstances it will be impractical for us to meet our service standards. In such cases you will not be entitled to a payment.

Examples of where exclusions may apply are:

- Exceptional or severe weather conditions
- Industrial action
- Third party action including action by customers.

Where a payment is made, it does not act as an admission of liability for any other purpose. Similarly, its acceptance by the customer, will not affect any other liability owed to them.

### 8.16 If you are not satisfied

If you are not satisfied with anything relating to our promises, you're welcome to contact us by telephone, letter, email or through our website. Our complaints process can be found on our website ([www.espwater.co.uk](http://www.espwater.co.uk)) or at Section 9 of this document. We will make it our priority to consider and resolve your complaint promptly and to your satisfaction.



If you still feel your complaint has not been adequately resolved, we will inform you of your right to refer the matter to another body. You can refer any unresolved dispute you have with us to the Consumer Council for Water (CCW), who will investigate it.

CCW is an independent statutory body, which represents and protects the interests of water and wastewater customers. You can contact them on:

**CCW**

23 Stephenson Street, Birmingham, B2 4BH.

Tel: 0300 034 2222

Email: [enquiries@ccwater.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ccwater.org.uk)

Website: [www.ccwater.org.uk](http://www.ccwater.org.uk)

## SECTION 9 – OUR COMPLAINT PROCESS

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We want to provide you with an excellent level of service, however, from time to time, things regrettably do go wrong. If this happens to you, please let us know straightaway and we will make it our priority to resolve the problem. Our complaints process which may be found on our web site [www.espwater.co.uk](http://www.espwater.co.uk) has been carefully developed by us and has been independently approved by Ofwat and CCW.

### 9.1 How to complain

**Step 1:** By telephone - This is the quickest way to get a complaint resolved. We always aim to deal with a telephone complaint the first time you call us.

**Step 2:** Email or letter - If you have given us a call and you still want to make a complaint, you can get in touch by email or letter. If you write to us, we will investigate the problem and respond within 5 working days of receiving your email or letter. If we fail to respond within 10 working days, you will be entitled to a penalty payment (see Our Promises to You at Section 8.).

**Step 3:** Review by Director - If you are still unhappy with the reply to your complaint, or the way your complaint was handled, you can write to us and ask for one of our directors to carry out a review.

**Step 4:** Review by Independent Customer Watchdog - If we have fully reviewed your complaint and you remain dissatisfied, you can ask the Consumer Council for Water (CCW) to review your case. This is an independent body which represents customers' interests and investigates complaints. You can contact them at:

#### CCW

23 Stephenson Street, Birmingham, B2 4BH.

Tel: 0300 034 2222

Email: [enquiries@ccwater.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ccwater.org.uk)

Website: [www.ccwater.org.uk](http://www.ccwater.org.uk)

Please note, CCW will not review your complaint unless our complaints' procedure has been completed first.

### 9.2 Water Industry Redress Scheme WATRS

If you remain dissatisfied following an investigation by CCW to resolve your complaint, you have the right to refer your complaint to WATRS.

WATRS is a free and independent adjudication service which reviews disputes between customers and companies that CCW have not been able to resolve. You can apply to them at:

#### WATRS

Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution International Dispute Resolution Centre

70 Fleet Street

London

EC4Y 1EU

Tel: 020 7520 3801

Email: [info@watrs.org](mailto:info@watrs.org)

Website: [www.watrs.org](http://www.watrs.org)

You can only apply WATRS after you have received a 'deadlock' letter from CCW.

### 9.3 Arbitration

Under the Water Industry Act 1991 some disputes between you and us may have to be decided by an arbitrator. We will have to agree who will be the arbitrator, but if we cannot agree, the President of the Institution of Civil Engineers, the Secretary of State for the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) or Ofwat can appoint an arbitrator.

For further details or advice on arbitration you will find the following websites for Chartered Institute of Arbitration useful ([www.ciarb.org](http://www.ciarb.org)) or alternatively [www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk).

Those disputes, which can be referred to arbitration, are:

- Prevention of contamination – Any dispute about the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999, which is designed to prevent contamination of the water supply, can be referred to arbitration
- Water meters – Any dispute about the location of a water meter, which we require to be installed in your property
- Street works – any dispute under Schedule 12 of the Water Industry Act 1991 about compensation in respect of street works powers.

### 9.4 Disputes determined by Ofwat

Under the Water Industry Act 1991, several disputes can be referred by either of us to Ofwat for determination. These are described in the table below:

Dispute Category	Questions for Ofwat to determine
New connections to water mains and associated works	Whether or not <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• any security for the expenses we expect to incur was reasonably required.</li> <li>• our expenses were incurred reasonably</li> <li>• conditions relating to separate supplies and metering are reasonable.</li> </ul>
A separate supply pipe for your property	Whether our requirement for your property to have a single supply service pipe is reasonable.
The terms and conditions of metering	Any dispute <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• about any terms and conditions, we apply as a condition of connecting your supply to the mains to allow us to install water meter and we cannot agree on the appointment of an arbitrator.</li> <li>• about whether it is practicable to fix charges by reference to volume of water supplied or where the company would incur unreasonable expense.</li> </ul>
Requirement to maintain pressure and supply	Any dispute about our requirement as to the effectiveness of the capacity of your water tank before we will connect your water supply.
Adoption of sewers or wastewater disposal works	An appeal against our proposal or refusal to adopt a sewer or works or about the conditions imposed

Connecting private sewers and drains to public sewers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any question as to the reasonableness of our refusal to allow the connection or our requirement to inspect your drain or sewer before allowing connection or about the costs and security we require you to pay.</li> <li>• Whether an estimate of the cost of our works or the requirement of security is reasonable.</li> </ul>
Power to alter a private drainage system	Where we intend to close your private drainage system, an appeal about the position or sufficiency of the replacement drain or sewer.
Power to close or restrict the use of a public sewer	Any dispute about the effectiveness of an alternative sewer provided to replace an existing one which is due to be closed.
Terms and conditions for the adoption of water mains – self lay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before work commences: Any dispute about the terms and conditions for agreement for the adoption of mains laid by a contractor.</li> <li>• On completion of works: Any dispute on financial arrangements e.g., build rate / income assessment etc.</li> </ul>
Terms and conditions for requisitioned Water mains/sewers/lateral drains	Any dispute about the financial terms for the provision of mains/sewers or lateral drains; the timescale for provision or route proposed.
Request to move company pipework	Dispute about the reasonableness of any refusal to move company pipework in response to a request to do so by you as the affected landowner.
New water mains	If you requisition a new water main, any dispute in respect of the amount we require you to pay, the undertakings or securities we require you to give, where we lay the main for your connection or the period within which we lay the main.
New public sewers	If you requisition a new public sewer, any dispute in respect of the amount we require you to pay, the undertakings or securities we require you to give, where we lay the sewer for your connection or the period within which we lay the sewer.
Exercise of works on private land	Any dispute about the way we have undertaken work on private land

Guaranteed standards of service scheme	Any dispute about <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a failure to meet one of our Guaranteed Standards of Service and</li><li>• whether you are entitled to a compensation payment under the Guaranteed Standards of Service scheme.</li></ul>
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### 9.5 Legal proceedings

The Water Industry Act also gives you the right, in certain circumstances, to take legal proceedings against us for any loss or damage caused to you by our failure to comply with our duties under the Act.

## SECTION 10 - YOUR PRIVACY

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We use information about you to manage your account so that we can provide the best level of service to you. We will start to collect this information when you register with us for water and/or wastewater services, and while you are our customer. We also use other publicly available information.

We may share with and obtain information about you with credit reference agencies, debt collection agencies, other utilities, and government departments. Where we have a legitimate reason in using your personal information, we do not need your consent to process it.

If we are using it for the purposes it was collected for, we will keep your personal information for as long as we need to.

You can contact us for a copy of the personal information we hold on you. There may be a charge for this service.

We may send out information to you about your account or our services, such as tips on water saving. We might also share your details with some of the partners we work with and send you information on their behalf. If you would prefer us not to send out these kinds of communications to you then please get in touch and let us know.

To view our complete privacy policy, please click [Privacy Policy | ESP Water](#).

## HOW TO CONTACT US

YOU CAN WRITE TO US AT:

ESP Water  
Blue Bird House  
Mole Business Park  
Leatherhead  
KT22 7BA

FOR BILLING, YOU CAN CALL US ON:

**0333 000 0059**

Our office hours for billing and account queries are:

**Monday - Friday 08:30 - 17:30**  
excluding bank holidays

YOU CAN EMAIL US AT:

For billing related enquiries:  
[billing@espwater.co.uk](mailto:billing@espwater.co.uk)

For all other enquiries:  
[GeneralEnquiries@espwater.co.uk](mailto:GeneralEnquiries@espwater.co.uk)

YOU CAN VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:

[espwater.co.uk](http://espwater.co.uk)

EMERGENCIES CONTACT:

For any emergencies with your water or wastewater supplies please call our 24 hour emergency number on 0330 123 4201