

Our promises to you

Introduction

We always want to give you the best service possible, and we work hard to ensure that all our customers receive a consistently high level of service by 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 and minimum payments refer to requirements for England only.**

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 you would like further information about your water supply or sewerage, please refer to our Customer Code of Practice on our website www.espug.com or call us for a copy on 01372 587500

If we fail to achieve the standards outlined in 1.1 to 1.3 below, we will credit your account with a payment that is equivalent to that offered by the upstream water company for your area. The minimum amount required by the Regulations is included as a guide.

1.1 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. (Minimum £40)
- If we must change the appointment, we will give you 24 hours' notice. (Minimum £50)

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 that offered by the upstream water company for your area. (Minimum £40).

There are certain circumstances, such as severe weather conditions that prevent our attendance or put staff at risk, where we are exempt from paying this compensation. For more information on when this applies please visit [GSS Standards](#).

1.2 Account queries

- We will reply to any written enquiry about the accuracy of a 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 5 working days of receipt.

If we fail to meet these standards, we will credit your account (Minimum £40). 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. (Minimum £40).

1.3 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 (Minimum £40). 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. (Minimum £40).

There are exceptions to the requirement to make GSS payments for 1.2 and 1.3, which can be seen in Ofwat's guidance. [GSS Standards](#).

1.4 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 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, or the supply is not restored on time, we will automatically credit £50 (households) and £100 (businesses) to your account and a further £50 or £100 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.**

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.

1.5 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 7 metres static head for at least one hour on two separate occasions within a 28-day period, you are automatically entitled to a £50 payment up to a maximum of 5 times per financial year. If you also experience ongoing low pressure, you may be automatically entitled to £250 per year. The standard does not apply if the pressure falls below the minimum standard due to necessary works taking place or due to drought.
- 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.

If you were affected and we have not credited your account, please call us within three months of the latter occasion of low pressure. **Should the upstream water company offer a higher payment then we will credit your account with the equivalent value.**

There are exceptions to the requirement to make GSS payments for 1.4 and 1.5, which can be seen in Ofwat's guidance. [GSS Standards](#). Advice on how to check your pressure is included in our Customer Code of Practice.

1.6 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 £300, up to a maximum of £2,000 per incident.
- For multiple incidents, an additional £100 to £500 per event applies within a 12-month period.
- 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 £150, up to a maximum of £1000.

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 £40 if you are a household and £100 if you are a business. Please call us to make a claim.

If you have been affected and we have not credited your account, please make a claim within three months of the incident.

There are certain circumstances in which the company need not make a payment if effluent enters a customer's land or property. These circumstances are explained in [GSS Standards](#).

1.7 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.

1.8 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, If the quality of water supplied is not restored within 48 hours of the water quality notice being served we will automatically pay you £40 (£60 for businesses) with a supplementary £20 (£40 for businesses) for each number of complete 24 hour periods after the initial 48 hour period. This is capped at the total charges payable by the customer for the financial year in which the notice is served. The quality of water supply is deemed to be restored when the Notice is lifted.
- 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.

There are exceptions to the requirement to make GSS payments for 1.8, which can be seen in Ofwat’s guidance. [GSS Standards](#)

1.9 Water shortages

- If we must interrupt or cut off your supply because of a Drought Order, we will automatically pay you £10 (Households) or £50 (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.**

1.10 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.

1.11 Water Meters

- We will read your meter at least once in a 13 month period, unless you refuse access to the premises for the purpose of reading your meter or you obstruct the reading of the meter; If we fail to do this then you will automatically be entitled to £40 on the first time and £80 on the second or subsequent time.
- Otherwise, 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.

1.12 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.

1.13 Priority Services Register and Core Priority Services

There are minimum standards for household customers on priority services registers. These are known as Core Priority Services and are listed below:

- delivery of an alternative water supply during any supply interruption.
- use of alternative formats of communication, such as braille, audio information, or large print; and,
- allowing a person appointed by, or on behalf of, the customer to manage their account on their behalf.

If you are eligible to receive Core Priority Services, we will add you to the Core Priority Services Register (CPSR) and send you a confirmation statement within 30 days of your request to be added. This statement will include the following:

- a statement of the reasons why you are included in the core priority services register.
- which of the above-named core priority services we will provide; and,
- if a particular core priority service will be provided in the event of an incident or emergency, the latest time by which it expects to provide that service following such an incident or emergency.

If we do not meet this standard, we will automatically pay you a minimum of £100. This applies whether you actively requested Core Priority Services, or you were added in a different way e.g. through data sharing with other utilities or third parties.

1.14 Debt recovery action

If we give information to a credit reference agency in relation to your failure to pay our charges, or begins legal proceedings for the purposes of recovering your charges, without first:

- Giving you an outstanding charge notice, containing all the following:
 - the amount of the outstanding charges, and how that amount has been calculated.
 - the period to which the outstanding charges relate.
 - the address of the domestic premises to which the outstanding charges relate.
 - if the premises is metered, the serial number of that meter.
 - information about you can contact the company confirm receipt.
 - information about you can contact the company to pay the outstanding charges or to dispute or otherwise make representations.
 - the deadline for you to either pay the charges, raise a dispute, or make representations. This should be at least 30 calendar days beginning with the day the outstanding charge notice is given to you; and
 - information about the steps we may take regarding the charges, including giving information to a credit reference agency or beginning legal proceedings.
- Making a second attempt (containing the above information) to contact you if you have not either a) confirmed receipt of the outstanding charges notice, or b) contacted us to make arrangements for paying the outstanding charges or made representations in connection with them.
- Allowing at least 30 calendar days to pass from the issuing of the outstanding charge notice; and,
- Taking account of any steps taken, or representations or payments made by the customer.

Then we will automatically give you £150. Further detail is available in the [GSS Standards](#)

1.15 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.

1.16 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.espug.com or at Section 9 of our Code of Practice 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, you have the right to refer the matter 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:

Telephone: 0300 034 2222

CCW

23 Stephenson Street, Birmingham, B2 4BH.

Email: via a form on their website

www: www.ccw.org.uk

1.17 Summary Table (England only)

The table summarises the Guaranteed Standard Scheme (GSS) minimum payment. **However, should the upstream water company offer a higher payment then we will credit your account with the equivalent value.**

GSS Regulation	GSS Payment		Late Payment Penalty	
	Residential Customers	Business Customers	Residential Customers	Business Customers
Making appointments Regulation 17C (England)	£40	£40	£40	£40
Keeping appointments Regulation 17C (England)	£50	£50	£40	£40
Account queries not actioned on time Regulation 17D (England)	£40	£40	£40	£40
Requests about changes to payment arrangements not actioned on time Regulation 17D (England)	£40	£40	£40	£40
Complaints not actioned on time Regulation 17D (England)	£40	£40	£40	£40
Notice of interruption to supply Regulation 17F (England)	£50	£100	£40	£100
Supply not restored on time Regulation 17F (England)	£50, and £50 for each subsequent 12 hours (up to cap of twice customer's annual water supply charge)	£100, and £100 for each subsequent 12 hours (up to cap of twice customer's annual water supply charge)	£40	£100

Low pressure Regulation 17G (England)	£50, up to five payments per financial year.	£50, up to five payments per financial year.	£40	£40
Flooding from sewers – internal flooding Regulation 17H (England)	Payment equal to annual sewerage charges, at minimum of £300 and maximum of £2000 For repeated incidents in the same rolling 12-month period, the minimum increases by £100 per repeat occurrence and the maximum by £500 per repeat occurrence.	Payment equal to annual sewerage charges, at minimum of £300 and maximum of £2000 For repeated incidents in the same rolling 12-month period, the minimum increases by £100 per repeat occurrence and the maximum by £500 per repeat occurrence.	£40	£100
Flooding from sewers – external flooding Regulation 17I (England)	Payment equal to 50% of annual sewerage charges, at minimum of £150 and maximum of £1000 For repeated incidents in the same rolling 12-month period, the minimum increases by £50 per repeat occurrence and the maximum by £250 per repeat occurrence.	Payment equal to 50% of annual sewerage charges, at minimum of £150 and maximum of £1000 For repeated incidents in the same rolling 12-month period, the minimum increases by £50 per repeat occurrence and the maximum by £250 per repeat occurrence.	£40	£40
Household customers in arrears Regulation 17IA (England)	150	-	£40	-

Reading of meters Regulation 17IC (England)	(a) £40, if it is the first time that the company has failed to read the customer's meter as required (b) £80, if it is the second or subsequent time that the company has failed to read the customer's meter as required.	(a) £40, if it is the first time that the company has failed to read the customer's meter as required (b) £80, if it is the second or subsequent time that the company has failed to read the customer's meter as required.	£40	£40
Core Priority Services Regulation 17ID (England)	100	-	£40	-
Water quality notices: restrictions on consumption etc. of water Regulation 17IE (England)	£40, with a supplementary £20 for each number of complete 24-hour periods after the initial 48-hour period during which the quality of supply is not restored.	£60, with a supplementary £40 for each number of complete 24-hour periods after the initial 48-hour period during which the quality of supply is not restored.	£40	£40