



County Water Customer Code

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COUNTY WATER

Introduction

Who we are

County Water is a water company that provides sewage services to properties within Heyford Park. This essential service is the collection, treatment and safe disposal of sewage and rain water. If your property falls within the boundary of our operations, as will be made clear by our sewer maps, the information set out in this code is relevant to you.

We are also responsible for maintaining the sewers and drains that removes unwanted waste and rainwater away from your property and into our treatment plant.

Who this code is for?

This code is for our domestic customers, it details your statutory rights regarding the services that we provide you with. This code explains the standard of service you can expect to receive, what our duties are as well as what your obligations are in terms of payment and responsibility. There will be explanations of the additional services we offer as well as information on how to make a complaint if you are dissatisfied with our service. We have also listed the regulatory authorities which you can contact should you feel necessary.

Nothing in this Code affects your rights under law and it is not a formal contract between you and us.

Regulatory Framework

Water companies who are responsible for operating potable and wastewater services are known as water undertakers and sewerage undertakers respectively. Water and sewerage undertakers are the appointed companies for specific geographical areas and are also responsible for supplying services direct to household customers and non-household customers who are connected to their network. County Water Ltd is a sewerage undertaker.

Appointed water companies are granted a license by the Water Services Regulation Authority also known as Ofwat. The license is part of the regulatory framework that water companies must comply with and is part of the Water Act 2014. The water industry is also governed by various other regulators who monitor compliance and the legal obligations of water companies. The conditions of these obligations form part of the license, which include how we should behave towards you, our customers.

Ofwat - The water services regulation authority

Ofwat are the economic regulator of the water industry and as well as ensuring water companies are run in a manner that is profitable and efficient they are also responsible for protecting the interests of customers. They ensure that water companies are adhering to the conditions that form part of the license.

CC Water - Consumer Council for water

The Consumer Council for Water (CCWater) was established in 2005 and is an independent voice for all water consumers in England and Wales.

They represent consumers within the water and sewerage sectors. They also investigate consumer complaints if the issue has not been resolved by the water company.

The Water Redress Scheme

The Water Redress Scheme (WATRS) is an independent adjudicator consumers can use if there is an issue that has not been resolved by CCWater and the water company. This is a free and impartial service.

Environment Agency

The Environment Agency (EA) is the environmental regulator of the water and sewerage sector. They advise the government on environmental issues to ensure the protection and improvement of the environment. They set the standard of the quality of water that is discharged back into rivers and streams from treatment plants.

Guaranteed Standard Scheme (GSS)

The GSS is the guaranteed minimum standards of service customers of water and sewerage companies are entitled to, as laid down by the government. Customers are entitled to payment by a water and sewerage company when they fail to meet a specific standard. The scheme is monitored by Ofwat and covers:

- Making and keeping appointments
- Account queries and requests about payment arrangements
- Enquiries
- Complaints
- Written Complaints
- Internal Flooding
- External Flooding

A full explanation of what you are entitled to if we fail to meet a minimum standard of service is set out within this code.

Your wastewater services

Public and Private Sewers/Drains

- A drain carries foul sewage, wastewater or rainfall from a single property
- A lateral drain is an extension of your private drain that lies outside of your property boundary and connects with our public sewer.
- A sewer carries sewage, wastewater and rainfall from more than one property.
- A highway gully or drain, removes rainwater from roads and pavements.
- A culverted watercourse is a visible surface watercourse that has travelled through pipework under roads, driveways or housing developments.

We are responsible for public sewers that are situated underground in roads, footpaths or public open spaces. Public sewers may also run through private gardens and we have a right to access them if the pipework requires maintenance. We are also responsible for lateral drains. If an underground watercourse passes through your property you are legally defined as the owner under the Land Drainage Act 1991 and 1994. This means you are responsible for its maintenance and repair.

Private drains that serve only your property which are situated within your property boundary are your responsibility. If you experience problems to your private drains it will be your responsibility to have the problem investigated. A local plumber should be able to help however you will be liable for all charges and costs for drainage problems within your property boundary. It may also be worth checking the terms of your home insurance policy to see if you are covered for blocked drains.



Statutory sewer maps

We are duty bound to produce a drawing showing the location of every public sewer or disposal main which is vested in County Water Ltd. It is your right to inspect our drawings. You can call our customer service team who will advise you where you can inspect the relevant map.

Sewer Blockages

Sewer blockages are a result of misuse and can cause disturbing and unpleasant experiences to those affected. Blockages are caused by things entering the sewage system which should be disposed of elsewhere, for example, grease, nappies or paper towels.

Blockages may cause sewerage to spill out of manholes and into properties or rivers; so it is very important to only use your toilets and sinks for what they are intended for. You will recognise a blockage if you have difficulties with flushing your toilet, water drains away slowly, unusual smells or if there is an overflowing manhole nearby.

It is our responsibility to clear blockages found in the public sewer and your responsibility if the blockage is found within your property boundary. If more than one property is having problems or there is widespread sewage flooding it will most likely be our responsibility to resolve the problem. Blockages found in public sewers and lateral drains are cleared at our cost.

Our site team will be able to get you within six hours if you feel you have an issue with your drainage but depending on the severity of the problem this may take between 1 to 24 hours. We will need to investigate the blockage and confirm who owns the blocked pipework. For a fixed fee we will spend up to two hours investigating and clearing the blockage if the issue is found within your boundary or alternatively you can make your own arrangements to clear the blockage.

Sewer Flooding

Sewer flooding is a serious problem that we take measures against by ensuring the quality of our work and providing sufficient capacity in our sewers.

Sewer flooding can be caused by blockages in the sewer system, storm water entering the sewer system or a pumping station breakdown. The majority of our sewers have separate pipes for rainwater and waste water meaning during a storm the risk of sewage flooding is reduced. However, extreme weather circumstances may create a risk of flooding that cannot be controlled by us as there is a limit to the capacity of all sewers.

If you are affected by sewer flooding you will need to contact us on our 24 hour emergency phone number. There are measures that we can take to help you however the cover of costs depends on liability, whether or not negligence has occurred and whether you have taken out an insurance policy.

If you suffer from internal sewerage flooding due to our sewers we will aim to get to your property within two hours. Depending on the severity and whether the flood is internal or external we will attend within 2 – 4 hours. It may take longer than this if we are dealing with a major event that affects a number of properties.

If our public sewer has caused flooding we offer a free clean up service of the affected area. We will aim to begin the clean-up service on the same day the flooding occurs, however, if a large area is affected or the flood waters have not drained away it may take up to 48 hours. Our response times may vary during periods of exceptional weather.

Our clean up service includes:

- Litter picking
- Removal of solids
- Washing down affected areas
- Pumping out basements
- Disinfection

It does not include the removal or disposal of internal decorations, carpets, furniture or flooring.

If you do suffer from sewer flooding make sure children and pets are kept well away from the affected areas. Ultraviolet light from the sun kills the bacteria. As a guide the time it takes for bacteria to be killed is listed below:

- Nine days when warm and sunny
- 20 days when damp and cool
- 25 days when wet and cold

If you notice wastewater flowing into a stream or river please contact us straight away.

Responsibility if sewer flooding occurs

Whilst private sewers may connect to a public sewer, responsibility for the private sewer lies with the owners of the properties which it serves. Therefore if flooding is caused by private sewers then the responsibility for actions and costs lies with the property owners.

A public sewer is the responsibility of the company, as will be shown clearly on the sewer map for your area which we are duty bound to provide. Therefore if flooding is caused by our negligence towards the public sewers then County Water will be held responsible. Flooding within a private property may be our responsibility if multiple properties are having problems, i.e. if there is widespread sewer flooding in your area.

For a fixed fee we will spend up to two hours investigating and clearing a blockage if the issue is found within your boundary or alternatively you can make your own arrangements. If the problem persists within seven days we will clear it for free.

Your own plumber should be able to help clear a blockage from your private drain. Should you take out an insurance policy, depending on the terms of your particular policy, you may be covered against the cost of blockage clearances.

We are not liable for any damage caused by sewage flooding unless we have been negligent. We cannot be responsible for items that are put down our sewers or extraordinary weather.

Properties at risk of flooding

If you do experience flooding on your property we will aim to produce a solution as well as preventative methods to stop the flooding reoccurring. However it is advisable to assess whether your property is at risk of flooding, and to consider taking out insurance.

You can contact us for advice on your property's level of risk and we can offer recommendations for taking out insurance.

If we concur that your property is at risk of recurring flooding we will aim to monitor your property's risk and provide regulatory measures where necessary.

It is our duty to make a GSS payment to the customer each time flooding occurs internally or externally if it is a result of problems in our public drains caused by our negligence.

Building over or near to a public sewer

Anyone who proposes to build over or close to our public sewers will need consent. You can contact us for further information on applying for approval.

If you discover a sewer they weren't aware of during a build you can contact us and we will investigate within 48 hours.

Connection of a Private Drain to a Public Sewer

You are entitled to have your drain or private sewer connected to our public sewer if it is practicable to do so and you bear all reasonable costs. We will require details of how the connection is to be made and the intended loads into our sewers.

We will refuse any proposal if we feel the connection will affect our sewers and the capacity of our sewage works. We will make a decision within 14 days of the proposal.

We do not intend to undertake ground works for customers. However we will insist that the final connection is carried out by our approved contractor(s) or that the final connection is inspected by one of our employees. We will require a date of when the connection will be completed so we can inspect the work.

We will require a detailed proposal of the works and the customer must liaise with the relevant authority to carry out works in the street or public footpaths.

We would charge for inspecting the works or making the connection. We would also charge a fixed payment to ensure our sewers can cope with the extra demand, this charge is called an infrastructure charge.

New Sewer Requisitions

You are entitled to ask us to provide a new sewer to serve several properties. You can do this on your own or make a joint requisition with your neighbours, or you can go through the local authorities who will ask us on your behalf.

The person who serves the notice is responsible for ensuring that all costs are paid for. We can accept a single payment in advance or an agreed payment plan can be arranged. In order to set up a payment plan it will have to be agreed mutually. You can call us to discuss your requirements so that a suitable plan can be arranged. Charges will be regulated by law and you can request further information on this by contacting us. So long as it is practical to do so, we are obliged to provide the sewer within six months of your agreement, failure to meet this deadline resulting in loss or damage on your part may mean to take out a legal claim against us. If there are changes in circumstance or we need to extend the time limit, both parties can discuss the case with Ofwat.

Requisition of a Lateral Drain

You are also entitled to request that we provide a lateral drain from the public sewer to the boundary of your property. You will need to pay all reasonable costs, if there is disagreement over the cost then this can be referred to Ofwat.

County Water Ltd are required to provide a new sewer in some circumstances. Such circumstances include the instance of the existing private drainage system causing serious environmental damage or amenity issues.

For example, we would be obliged to provide a new sewer if you experience:

- Faulty cesspits or septic tanks
- Pollution of a ditch, stream or river
- Smell

Charges and bills

Charges

You will receive separate bills for your water service at Heyford Park. One will be for providing wastewater services and one will be from your potable water supplier.

Types of Charges

We also publish our approved charges on our website so that they are accessible for you. Our charge schemes and tariffs are approved by the Consumer Council for Water and Ofwat.

If you use our services you are expected to pay for them and will be billed accordingly. We will send bills directly to you. If you are a tenant of rented accommodation and you have agreed with your landlord they are responsible for the charges we must have a written agreement stating this. When an agreement is in place we will send the bill to your landlord.

If you contact us with a query about the accuracy of your bill we are duty-bound to guarantee minimum standards of service and therefore respond to you within ten working days to try to amend this query. If we fail to meet this standard we will be required to make specific payments to affected customers. The payments will be in accordance to GSS regulations and as per the minimum amounts set out in the 2008 GSS regulation document.

There are two types of standard charges we use to work out your bill and the type of charge you will receive depends on whether you live in a metered property or a non-metered property. The types of charges are:

1. Metered charge. This charge is based on the volume of water used.
2. Assessed Household Charge. This charge is based on the number of bedrooms in the property.

Both charges include a fixed charge to cover the cost of maintaining our sewers, pumping stations, treatment works and the administration of your account.

Metered Charge

If you have a water meter we calculate your bill by working out the volume of water you have used plus a fixed charge. We intend to send you your bill every six months based on your actual water meter readings.

You will be able to pay your bill using the following options:

- Direct debit
- Debit/credit card
- Online banking
- At a bank
- By post
- PayPoint

Whether you have a water meter installed will be at the discretion of the company that supplies your potable water. It is common practice for all new build properties to include meters and the majority in Heyford Park are installed in the footpath. We intend to read your meters every 6 months to ensure you receive the most up to date billing information.

If you feel your meter is incorrect or there is a leak to your supply pipe you will need to contact your water supplier. For further information on metered supplies please contact your supplier.

Assessed Household Charge

You will be charged the assessed household charge if you live in a property that does not have a water meter fitted. We are not responsible for fitting water meters and you will need to contact your water supplier to find out whether you are applicable.

The assessed household charge is based on the number of bedrooms in your property and this charge also includes a single occupier tariff. For more information please contact us or visit our website.

WaterSure

WaterSure is a scheme which helps people to pay their water bills by capping their bill to be no more than the average metered water bill in the area. To be eligible you must be receiving benefits and need to use a lot of water, either, for medical reasons or there is a certain number of school age children living in your house. You must also be on a metered water supply.

As your water and sewerage services are provided by different companies, you will need to apply through your potable water supplier and they will then inform us if you have applied for WaterSure. If you qualify we will then adjust our charges to suit.

For more information on WaterSure please contact your water supplier or visit your water supplier's website.

Payment and Debt recovery

If you are having difficulties repaying your bill you must contact us immediately so that we can try to help. We cannot reduce the amount that you have to pay, however there are other ways in which we can help.

If you struggle to pay your bill and end up in debt to us, you will be notified and the debt will be added to your next bill. If you are going to struggle to pay off the debt you need to contact us so that a payment plan can be agreed, by which you will pay monthly installments. Any payment plan will need to be set up at a level that means that the debt would be paid off by the end of the financial year. If there are arrears on the account a longer period may be agreed to make the payments more manageable for you.

If you do not pay your bill or keep to a payment plan, we will have to take action and pursue the unpaid charges. If you miss a payment you will be sent a reminder, and if we do not hear from you after this, we will then send you notice of our intention to request a claim for non-payment from the County Court. If you have been on an installment payment plan and you do not respond to our reminders, we will cancel the payment plan and the claim will be covering the total amount of debt.

If you fail to respond to this notice, we may ask the Court to issue a claim or ask a Debt Collection Agency to recover the outstanding money.

If a Court Claim is issued this adds to the debt you owe as you will also have to pay Court and Solicitors costs. You can ask the Court to decide how you must pay the debt off however this may create additional Court costs. You are entitled to dispute the Court Claim if you believe you do not owe the money claimed. Failure to respond to the Court Claim means the Court will make an Order for the full

debt against you. There can be further legal action taken against you, including the issue of a warrant to seize goods. A Court Order for payment may affect your credit record.

When a Court Order for payment has been made and there is still no agreement for payment with the customer we may take one/all of the following actions:

- Ask a debt collection agency to recover the money
- Visit the customer to arrange a payment plan
- Ask the Court to issue an enforcement process e.g. a warrant for a court bailiff to seize your goods, an Attachment of Earnings Order, enforcing your employer to pay us directly from your wages, a Charging Order if you own your own home, meaning that you cannot complete a sale of your property until the payment is completed.

Moving into your home

You must make an account with us once you have moved into a home within our area. You can provide us with a meter reading or if you are unable to do so we can do this for you.

Moving out of your home

You will need to inform us if you are moving home and provide us with their new address details and the meter reading.

If you are unable or unwilling to read your meter we will require one week's notice before you move and we will read the meter.

Complaints Procedure

If a customer contacts us expressing dissatisfaction with the services that we provide or to make an allegation that our actions have not met their expected standards, we regard this as a complaint.

We ask that complaints are directly communicated to the Customer Service Department. You can either call or write to us to make a complaint.

During your communication with the company whilst making a complaint, the members of staff you talk to will give you their name for your future reference, and complaints will be recorded.

We will not record anonymous complaints as it is not practical to do so.

Complaints via telephone:

Calls will be answered as promptly as is possible, however there may be a delay in times of emergency. Details of your complaint will be recorded, including the name of the member of staff dealing with the complaint.

If the person you speak to on the phone cannot deal with your complaint for whatever reason, the complaint will be passed on to someone who can deal with the complaint effectively.

If the complaint requires a site visit we will aim to send you a written response within ten working days. If you wish to make a complaint in person you will have to call us to arrange an appointment to do so.

The formal procedure for investigating and responding to complaints

Level 1:

You will receive a response from an employee in the Customer Services team who will deal with the complaint. The complaint may be passed over to an employee who may be able to deal with your issue more effectively. We will always aim to deal with your complaint at first contact. However, we may need to investigate what it is at fault and get back to you. We will get back to you within 10 working days.

Level 2:

If you are dissatisfied with the first response you will be asked to write a letter to the general manager stating the reasons why you think the initial response was not satisfactory.

Level 3:

If you are still dissatisfied after having a response from our general manager, you can contact CCWater to investigate the complaint.

Level 4:

If you remain unsatisfied you can refer the complaint to WATRS.

Written complaints

The cause of the complaint will be addressed as quickly as possible. In situations where the problem cannot be put right immediately we will take action to reduce the effect of the problem, where possible, and remain in contact with you to keep you informed of action that we are taking.

If the cause of the complaint is complicated and thus involves negotiations with other parties we will keep you informed on the progress with monthly updates.

All of our staff who deal with complaints have been trained on how to do so. They will be polite and courteous and understanding at all times when dealing with complaints. They will also respond to complaints as efficiently as possible.

In response to your complaint we shall thank you for contacting us and apologize where we are at fault. We shall also include in our response an explanation of the matters raised by you; the cause of the problem, a description of the action which has been taken to resolve the problem, any action which we plan to take to resolve the problem and the timescale that we plan to operate by.

Or, we may provide an explanation as to why we are not able to satisfy your expectations.

Where we are responsible for the cause of the complaint we will act to correct the problem as quickly as possible. However, if we are not responsible for the cause of the complaint than we shall explain this to you and advise you on who to contact or what actions you should take to correct the cause of your complaint. We will provide a contact and telephone number where appropriate.

If the responsibility for the cause of the complaint lies elsewhere we can offer advice about who you should contact.

Complaints about employees will be handled by a member of management senior to the person in question. Our staff have the right to privacy and therefore we cannot disclose with the customer any disciplinary action taken by us in response to the complaint.

Recording and monitoring complaints

As stated, all complaints will be recorded on the day they are received. We will record the content of the complaint, customer details, any special circumstances, whether a GSS is involved, and the date on which a reply is due to be sent.

In an emergency situation, it may be necessary to record telephone complaints at a later stage. Managers will monitor complaints that are not answered within five days.

Dissatisfaction with complaint handling

If you are dissatisfied with the way that we have handled a complaint the case will be reviewed by a senior manager responsible for the area associated with your complaint. If this senior manager has already been involved in the complaints progress then the company Director will carry out an independent review.

A substantive response will be made within 10 days. A GSS payment will be made for failures to meet this target.

Special requirements

If you are unable to make a written complaint please phone us and explain and we will make arrangements either for a telephone call or in person visit to take the details of your complaint. Where appropriate we will send a written note confirming the details that we have recorded. When you are satisfied with what we have recorded we will formally begin to review a complaint and we will respond within 10 working days in appropriate format. If necessary we will make a further visit to you to discuss the progress of the complaint.

In the event that you remain dissatisfied after a senior manager has reviewed the complaint, the matter may be referred to CCWater; their details and role are detailed in this code. CCWater is independent of us.

If you remain dissatisfied following CCWater's efforts to resolve the complaint you can get in contact with WATRS; details and role detailed in this code.

Legal redress

In some cases you have legal right to refer a problem either to arbitration or to OFWAT, or to the Courts. If we cannot reach agreement with you we will notify you of your right to refer the matter to another body.

Matters which may be referred elsewhere include:

- Financial conditions for water supply or sewerage requisition
- Conditions for disconnecting and reconnecting non-domestic supplies
- Extensions to the period within which a sewer must be provided after requisition
- Changes to the places at which private sewers and drains connect with the requisitioned sewer
- Adoptions of sewers and sewage disposal works
- Conditions for connection of a drain to a public sewer
- Requirement that a proposed drain or sewer be constructed so as to form part of the general drainage system
- Alterations to drainage systems of premises
- Closure and prohibition of use of a public sewer
- Our exercise of entry powers on private land

Monitoring complaints and performance:

We will conduct regular reports on the types of complaints received and our performance in responding to them which will be reviewed our Directors. This information will be used to help us improve our services to you.

Quality audits on our complaint handling may include customer research that we may ask you to participate in.

Independent audits of the way we handle complaints will be taken by CCWater.

Confidentiality

We will treat any information held about you with strict confidentiality. Access to information by employees will be kept to a strictly need to know basis. As will information relating to employees. Relevant provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 apply to information held by us, and disciplinary action may be taken against employees who breach this.

Additional Services

We are committed to ensuring our customers have a good understanding of their bills and that they understand the service and information we provide for them.

If you feel you have any specific requirements that we should know about, especially in times of an emergency, you can let us know and we will try to assist you.

Services Available

We provide additional services for customers that have difficulty in reading our bills. The services we provide are as follows:

- Large print bills – You can request all future bills to be printed in a larger font.
- Talking bill service – You can request we telephone you when you receive a new bill to explain your charges or any other queries you may have.
- Colored background bills – We can provide different colored background bills of your choice if you suffer from dyslexia.
- Email bills – You can request we email your bills if you use a screen reading software.

If you are hard of hearing or deaf you can text us on our emergency mobile number. If you have a wastewater emergency you can let us know your problem and we will respond, via text, 24 hours a day. Please include your name, address and a brief description of your problem.

If you decide you would like a friend, relative or carer to handle your bills and letters you will need to let us know. You can tell us the name and of the person who you are authorizing to represent you, as well as their relationship to you. This information will go onto your account and your representative will be able to communicate with us.

Removal of rainwater

If rainwater from your property does not drain into our sewers we will offer a reduction to your bill. If you believe you are entitled to a reduction we will visit the property to inspect the drainage arrangements and amend your bill if necessary.

Keeping Safe

Our employees will carry identification when they visit you on an appointment. You should inspect their identification before letting them into your home. Any member of our staff will be happy to wait outside while you call us to confirm the appointment so that you feel safe.

If you have made an appointment for a home visit with one of our customer service team you can ask for a doorstep password to be created that only you and our customer team will know. When a member of our team knock at your door they will tell you the password to confirm that they are from County Water.

It is important to remember that we are not the 'Water Board'. The water board does not exist and you must not let anyone into your property who claims to be from the water board.

Access to Private Property

The majority of our sewers are located across public land, however, there may be instances where one of our sewers is located on private land. We would require access to private land if a sewer was in need of repair, to lay a new sewer or check if there are is faulty drainage connection.

We may also need access onto your property to read your water meter.

If a sewer needs to be replaced or repaired we will contact you to let you know what needs doing and confirm a mutually agreed date and time.

What Standard of Service Can I Expect

Customers of licensed water companies are entitled to guaranteed standards of service, as laid down by the government. Where we fail to meet a standard that is set out in the regulations we are required to make specific compensation payments to our customers.

At County Water Ltd we are committed to customer satisfaction and will monitor our performance through customer satisfaction surveys, assessing the serviceability and reliability of our assets.

Making and keeping appointments

When we make an appointment to visit your premises either by writing or telephone, we as a minimum, will inform you whether we are going to visit in the morning (before 1pm) or the afternoon (after 1pm). Additionally, you can request an appointment within a two hour time frame and wherever possible we will try to arrange an exact appointment time.

If we fail to make an appointment in a specified time frame you will be entitled to the minimum GSS payment of £50.

We have up to 24 hours to inform you of a change in an appointment and you cannot claim a payment if you have cancelled the appointment. We are not required to make a payment when it becomes impractical to make the appointment due to:

1. Severe weather conditions
2. Industrial action by County Water employees
3. An act or default by a person that does not represent our company

Account queries and requests about payment arrangements

We will reply to you within ten working days if we receive a written query about the correctness of your account.

We will also notify you within five working days if you request a change in payment method but we are unable to agree with the request.

If we fail to reply to you within the time frames above you will be entitled to the minimum GSS payment of £50.

We are not entitled to make a payment if:

- You inform us that you do not wish to pursue the query or request.
- If a response is not made within the required period because of industrial action of our employees, or the act or default of a third party.
- If the query or request was incorrectly addressed.
- From the point at which a correspondence becomes frivolous or vexatious.

Enquiries

We will reply to you within ten working days if we receive a written enquiry about your wastewater service or if you send a written complaint.

If we fail to reply to you within the time frames above you will be entitled to the minimum GSS payment of £30.

We are not entitled to make a payment if:

- You inform us that you do not wish to pursue the query or request.
- If a response is not made within the required period because of industrial action of our employees, or the act or default of a third party.
- If the query or request was incorrectly addressed.
- From the point at which a correspondence becomes frivolous or vexatious.

Complaints

If a customer contacts us expressing dissatisfaction with the services that we provide or to make an allegation that our actions have not met their expected standards, we regard this as a complaint.

We ask that complaints are directly communicated to the Customer Service Department. You can either call or write to us to make a complaint.

During your communication with the company whilst making a complaint, the members of staff you talk to will give you their name for your future reference, and complaints will be recorded.

We will not record anonymous complaints as it is not practical to do so.

Written complaints

For written complaints you can request that we send an acknowledgement of receipt on the day that the complaint is received, and we will provide a response within 10 working days. As stated above in the Enquiries section; failure to reply to you within the 10 day time frame will entitle you to the minimum GSS payment of £30.

We are not entitled to make a payment if:

- You inform us that you do not wish to pursue the query or request.
- If a response is not made within the required period because of industrial action of our employees, or the act or default of a third party.
- If the query or request was incorrectly addressed.
- From the point at which a correspondence becomes frivolous or vexatious.

Where it is possible, the cause of the complaint will be addressed as quickly as possible. In situations where the problem cannot be put right immediately we will take action to reduce the effect of the problem where possible, and remain in contact with you to keep you informed of action that we are taking.

The formal procedure for investigating and responding to complaints is this:

Level 1:

You will receive a response from an employee in the Customer Services team who will deal with complaints.

Level 2:

If you are dissatisfied with the first response you can request to have a senior manager review the complaint and the way that it has been handled.

Level 3:

If you are still dissatisfied after having a response from a senior manager, you can contact CCWater to investigate the complaint.

Level 4:

If you remain unsatisfied you can refer the complaint to WATRS.

If the responsibility for the cause of the complaint lies elsewhere we can offer advice about who you should contact.

Complaints about employees will be handled by a member of management senior to the person in question. Our staff have the right to privacy and therefore we cannot disclose with the customer any disciplinary action taken by us in response to the complaint.

Internal flooding

If effluent from a sewer that is vested in County Water enters your building we will make an automatic GSS payment of the sum equal to your annual sewerage charge, up to a maximum of £1000. If the amount is less than £150 we will pay £150.

If we do not make a payment within 20 working days following on from the date sewage entered your property we will make an additional penalty payment of £20 if you are a domestic customer or £50 if you are a business customer. A payment will be made for each incident that occurs.

There are exceptions to whether we are required to make a payment if wastewater enters your building. These are if:

- a. sewer flooding was caused by:
 - by exceptional weather conditions
 - Industrial action by our employees
 - Your actions
 - A defect, inadequacy or blockage in your drains or sewers; or
- b. It is impractical for us to have identified you as being affected, and you did not make a claim within three months following the date of the internal sewer flooding incident

External flooding

If effluent from a sewer that is vested in County Water enters your land we will make an automatic GSS payment of the sum equal to 50% of your annual sewerage charge, up to a maximum of £500. If the amount is less than £75 we will pay £75.

If we do not make a payment within 20 working days following on from the date sewage entered your property we will make an additional penalty payment of £20 if you are a domestic customer or £50 if you are a business customer. A payment will be made for each incident that occurs.

There are exceptions to whether we are required to make a payment if wastewater enters your building. We will not be held liable unless the flooding is a result of negligence on our part. Therefore County Water is not required to make a payment if sewer flooding was caused by:

- Exceptional weather conditions
- Industrial action by our employees
- Your actions
- A defect, inadequacy or blockage in your drains or sewers;
- You did not make a claim within three months following the date of the internal sewer flooding incident
- We have already made a payment in respect to the same incident for internal sewer flooding.
- You were not materially affected by the incident
- You did not make a claim within three months following the date of the external sewer flooding incident

We decide whether you have been materially affected by the incident by taking account on of:

- Which parts of your land or property the effluent entered
- The duration of the flooding
- Whether the flooding restricted the access to your land or property
- Whether the flooding restricted the use of your land or property
- Any other relevant considerations of which we are aware

Penalty Payments

If we should be required to make penalty payments these will be paid within ten working days. The reasons for penalty payments being necessary include: broken appointments, failures in dealing with written complaints, billing enquiries, and written enquiries about your water or our care services .The payments will be as per the minimum payment amounts set out in the 2008 GSS document.

Data Protection

All information that we collect about our customers is secure and confidential as protected by law. In accordance with Section 7 of the Data Protection Act 1998, you have the right to request the details of the information that we have about you. In order for us to accept the request and for the safety of your own information, you must provide two forms of identification. These can be a current utility bill, bank statement or a recent bill from us. There will be an administration fee of £10 to process the request, and we will aim to have completed your request within 40 days.

Useful Contacts

Ofwat

Centre City Tower
7 Hill Street
Birmingham
B5 4 UA
Telephone: 0121 644 7500
e-mail: mailbox@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk

CCWater

c/o 1st floor, Victoria House
Victoria Square
Birmingham
B2 4AJ
Telephone: 0300 034 2222
e-mail: via the website at www.ccwater.org.uk

WATRS

70 Fleet Street
London
EC4Y 1EU
Telephone: 0207 520 3801
e-mail: info@watsr.org

Environment Agency

National Customer Contact Centre
PO Box 544
Rotherham
S60 1BY
Telephone: 03708 506 506
e-mail: enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

Contacting Us:

County Water

Heyford Park House
Camp Road
Upper Heyford
Bicester
Oxfordshire
OX255HD

Email: enquiries@countywater.co.uk

Website: www.countywater.co.uk

Telephone: 0333 3208 656