



How to Contact Us

What to do if you wish to complain

Excellent Service

Providing customers with a quality and value for money service is of paramount importance to the Company and all its employees. Dedication to customer care underpins our "customer first" approach.

How to complain

Making a complaint should not be an unpleasant experience. We need to know when we fall short of the mark, and we've made it easy for you to contact the person best trained to deal with your particular complaint.

Tom Norman
Operations Support Manager
Hartlepool Water
3 Lancaster Road
Hartlepool TS24 8LW

You can complain either in writing or by telephoning us on **01429 858050** between 8.30 am and 5.00 pm, Monday to Friday. You can also visit our office at Lancaster Road during these times. If you want to fax us the number is **01429 858000** and we can be emailed at enquiries@hartlepoolwater.co.uk

What happens when you complain?

If you contact us in person or by telephone we will try to resolve your complaint there and then. Sometimes this is not possible, but we will tell you when we will be able to telephone you, meet with you, or write to you with an answer – all will be within 10 working days.

If you write to us we aim to respond within 10 working days, providing you with a full and satisfactory explanation, and telling you what has been done to resolve the matter. If we fail to do this, we will pay you £20 compensation. Please see our "Customer Charter" leaflet for more details.

Whenever our service falls short of the mark we will always apologise and will arrange the appropriate compensation where this applies.

We keep a record of all complaints and learn lessons from them, which help us to improve our service in the future.

Reports on complaints are updated daily and reviewed by our Operations Support Manager on a monthly basis. These records are monitored and audited by independent certifiers.

If you are unhappy with our response

If you are not satisfied with our response please contact us again. We will refer the matter to our Water Operations Manager who will investigate the complaint. Or you can write to:

Kevin Ensell
Water Operations Manager
Hartlepool Water
3 Lancaster Road
Hartlepool TS24 8LW

The Water Operations Manager is independent of the original investigation into a complaint and will override the original decision if necessary.

We will try to resolve your difficulty quickly and fairly. This will normally be within 10 working days. We will inform you of your right to a review by The Consumer Council for Water if you are still dissatisfied when our Water Operations Manager responds.

The Consumer Council for Water (CCWater) – Independent review

If you are unhappy about the way we have dealt with your complaint, you can ask CCW to make an independent investigation. CCW represents the interests of customers of the water and sewerage companies in England and Wales. They are independent of the companies.

CCW can take up complaints on your behalf. Their address is:

The Consumer Council for Water
Northern Region
Eighth Floor, Northgate House
St Augustine's Way
Darlington DL1 1XA

Tel: 01325 464222
Linkline: 0845 7089367
Fax: 01325 369269
e-mail: northumbria@ccwater.org.uk

In the event of a dispute, which we are unable to resolve, we will accept CCW recommendation on compensation.

Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat)

You have the right to refer certain disputes to Ofwat. A full list of the disputes which you can refer to Ofwat is given at the back of this leaflet. This also shows when an arbitrator needs to be involved. We will inform you, during the course of a dispute, when any of these provisions apply.

Ofwat can be contacted at:

Centre City Tower
7 Hill Street
Birmingham B5 4UA
Tel: 0121 644 7500
Fax: 0121 644 7699
Email: enquiries [@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk)

Services Guarantees

We work hard to ensure that all our customers receive a consistently high level of service and we monitor our performance very carefully. If you believe we have failed to deliver our promises or if we have caused you inconvenience or a loss of service, please let us know.

We will deal with your complaint with the utmost urgency. We will always apologise for any poor or inadequate service and take immediate steps to improve the situation and make sure there is not repetition of the problem.

Our Customer Charter protects your rights. This Charter incorporates the standards and compensation payments which Companies are legally required to provide under the Guaranteed Standards Scheme plus some additional standards and payments we offer over and above the minimum required.

Our promises to you

- We will keep appointments we make with you
- We will answer your bill queries promptly
- We will change the way you pay your bill promptly when asked
- We will answer your complaints thoroughly and promptly
- We will tell you in advance when your water is to go off if we are doing planned works

- We will tell you when we can if there is an emergency supply cut-off and let you know where you can get a water supply in the meantime
- We will keep the water pressure at an acceptable level
- We will respond to concerns about your water quality and take water samples where necessary
- We will send you your bill for metered water promptly after taking a meter reading
- We will withdraw any incorrect County Court Summons and compensate you for our error
- We will replace our section of any lead pipework promptly
- We will pay compensation promptly where it is due.

For more details of these promises, please contact us for a copy of our Customer Charter leaflet on 01429 858050 Monday – Friday 8.30am – 5pm (excluding Bank Holidays) or visit our website www.hartlepoolwater.co.uk

There are a number of specific circumstances where we will make an automatic payment if we fail to meet our guaranteed standards.

For failing to meet our promises on appointments, billing queries, change of payment arrangement and complaints, if we do not make an automatic payment within 10 working days you can claim a further equivalent amount of compensation, providing you do so within three months of the original payment being due.

For failing to meet our promises on supply interruptions, we will make an automatic payment within 20 working days. If we fail to make this automatic payment, we will make a further payment to you automatically unless it was impractical for us to identify you as an affected customer. In this case, you can claim your payment within 3 months.

For failing to meet our promises for pressure, we will make an automatic payment unless it was impractical for us to identify you as an affected customer. In this case you can also claim your payment within 3 months.

Any dispute arising under our Guaranteed Standards Scheme may be referred to the Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat) for determination whose decision is binding.

Compensation

In addition to our Customer Charter, we recognise that there will be occasions when we fail to give you good service, causing inconvenience, loss or damage. We will quickly make a detailed assessment of the problem and discuss appropriate compensation with you. You will be given the name of a member of our team who will keep you in touch with the progress of any compensation claim. We will also keep you informed about the action we are taking to re-establish our normal service.

We will not compensate for poor service which is a result of your own actions or inactions. Customers are advised to insure their properties and contents against loss or damage. If you have a dispute which we are not able to resolve you can forward it to CCWater, Northern and we will accept any recommendation they may make with regard to compensation.

Special Care

We recognise that some customers may need that bit of extra help and we are committed to giving it wherever possible.

Our Careline register helps us to identify customers who need specific assistance or services. This is particularly relevant during any interruptions to water supply.

We can arrange to send your bill in Braille or large print, or read it to you over the telephone if you prefer. Alternatively it can be sent to a friend or relative.

We aim to protect householders from bogus callers by issuing all our staff who meet customers with an identity card. We also offer a password service for people with special needs. If you'd like more details of our Careline service, please ask for our leaflet. The information is also available in large print or on tape.

We offer disabled access and toilet facilities for customers who need to visit our offices.

Disputes which Ofwat may resolve

Guaranteed Standards Scheme – Any dispute about a failure to meet one of our guaranteed standards.

Street Works - any dispute where our street works have caused you losses.

Connections to Water Mains – Any dispute about the amount we require you to pay for connection to our water mains, or securities we require you to give before we will carry out the work.

Reconnection Charges – Any dispute about the amount we require you to pay as a commercial customer before reconnecting a supply which has been disconnected.

Separate Supply Pipes – Any dispute about our requirement for separate water supply pipes to separately occupied premises.

Conditions for Water Mains Requisitions – Any dispute about the amount we require you to pay, or the undertakings or securities we expect you to give, or about extending the three months time limit for us to provide a water main, or about where your water pipe should connect with the main.

Water Meters – Any dispute about our refusal to install a meter where not practical or too expensive.

Terms & Conditions for a non-domestic supply – Any dispute you might have as a commercial customer about your supply.

Terms & Conditions for the adoption of a self-laid main – Any dispute you might have as a developer where you have used a self lay Contractor to service your site.

Arbitration

Under the Water Industry Act some disputes between you and us may have to be decided by an arbitrator. We can agree between ourselves who this should be. If we can't agree, the President of the Institution of Civil Engineers, the Secretary of State for the Environment or Ofwat can appoint an arbitrator – depending on the dispute.

Those disputes which can be referred to arbitration are:

Prevention of Contamination – Any dispute about water regulations which are designed to prevent contamination of the water supply.

Water Meters - any dispute about the location of a water meter or the cost of our installation where the cost is charged to you.

Legal Proceedings

The Water Industry Act 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.

Sewerage Services

We do not provide sewerage services but we do collect sewerage charges on behalf of Northumbrian Water.

To report an emergency, or if you have an enquiry about waste water treatment and disposal, surface water drainage, blockages or flooding, please contact:

Customer Centre
Northumbrian Water
P O Box 300
DURHAM DH1 5WQ
Tel: **08457 17 11 00**

The leaflets in this series are:

- Code of Practice for Domestic and Commercial Customers – Introductory Leaflet
- Your water supply for Domestic and Commercial Customers
- Understanding charges for Domestic and Commercial Customers
- How to pay your bill (including a Code of Practice on Debt Recovery)
- Living with a Meter (including a Code of Practice on Leakage)
- How to contact us (what to do if you wish to complain)
- Pipelaying in Private Land
- Water watchdogs
- Customer Charter

In addition, we have a leaflet which gives details of our current charges. You can get a copy of any of our leaflets, free of charge, by ringing us on 01429 858050 Monday – Friday 8.30am – 5pm (excluding Bank Holidays). Or you can write to us or call in at our office:

3 Lancaster Road, Hartlepool, TS24 8LW

Or email – enquiries@hartlepoolwater.co.uk

Or visit our website www.hartlepoolwater.co.uk where you can download these leaflets.