



CUSTOMER CHARTER

incorporating GUARANTEED STANDARDS SCHEME

This leaflet explains our Customer Charter for Domestic and Commercial Customers. The scheme goes beyond the basic legal requirements.

Northumbrian Water have their own leaflet for sewerage services - 'Our promise of service to you' which you can get by phoning Customer Services on 08457 335566, or by writing to the address given in the section 'How to claim'.

The scheme is our way of guaranteeing that we will provide a good standard of service. If we fail to provide the guaranteed level of service we will pay compensation.

This leaflet explains how our scheme will work but it is not a legal document. Your basic legal rights are laid out in the Water Supply and Sewerage (Customer Service Standards) Regulations 1989 (as amended).

Throughout this leaflet you will see references to "working days". Working days are any days, which are not public holidays or Saturdays or Sundays.

Guaranteed standards of Service

1 KEEPING APPOINTMENTS

If we arrange an appointment (either in writing or verbally) to visit you we must tell you whether the visit will be before or after 1.00 p.m., or, if you request it, a 2 hour period during which the visit will be made. If we do not do this we will pay you £20 compensation.

If we fail to keep the appointment we will pay you £20 unless:

- you cancel the appointment; or
- we cancel the appointment after giving you at least 24 hours notice

2 QUESTIONS ABOUT BILLS

If you write to us with a genuine question or comment about your bill, we will reply within 10 working days. We will pay £20 compensation if we fail to do this, unless you tell us you do not want to take any further action;

3 ASKING TO CHANGE HOW YOU PAY

If you write to us and ask to change how you pay (for example, you apply to pay by instalments) and we cannot meet your request, we will tell you so within 5 working days.

We will pay £20 compensation if we fail to do this.

4 COMPLAINTS ABOUT WATER AND SEWERAGE SERVICES

You will receive a reply to genuine written complaints about your water supply or about your sewerage services within 10 working days. We will pay you £20 compensation if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

5 NOTICE THAT WE WILL INTERRUPT YOUR WATER SUPPLY

Planned Interruptions

We will tell you in writing if we intend to reduce or cut off your water supply for 4 hours or less. We will also tell you when we will put your supply back to normal. We will pay you £20 compensation in the case of domestic premises, or

£50 in other cases if we don't turn your supply back on by the time we said we would, and an extra £10 in the case of domestic premises, or £25 in other cases for each day that you are left without any supply, unless:

- your water supply is interrupted or cut off because of drought for which there is a separate compensation scheme; or
- it was impractical for us to identify you as being affected by the work, and you do not make a written claim for compensation within 3 months of our failure to reconnect your supply.

If your supply will be interrupted for more than 4 hours we will give you at least 48 hours written notice. We will also tell you when we will put your supply back to normal unless your water supply is interrupted or cut off because of drought, for which there is a separate compensation scheme.

Emergency Interruptions

In an emergency we cannot warn you that your supply be interrupted. However, we will do our best to tell you the reason for the interruption and where you can get water from. We will also tell you when we hope to put your supply back on and who you can contact for more information. If the emergency is caused by a leak or burst. We will pay you £20 compensation in the case of domestic premises, or £50 in other cases if we don't turn the supply back on by the time we said we would, and an extra £10 in the case of domestic premises, or £25 in other cases for each extra day that you are left without any water supply. In other emergencies we will put the supply back on within 12 hours of us finding out about the leak or burst. You will not get the compensation, if:

- we have interrupted or cut off the water supply to carry out necessary works in an emergency and in the circumstances it would not have been reasonable to put the supply back on within the time limit;
- it was impractical for us to identify you as being affected by the work, and you do not make a written claim for compensation within 3 months of us failing to meet the guaranteed standard; or
- your water supply is interrupted or cut off because of drought, for which there is a separate compensation scheme.

Repeated Emergency Interruptions

If your water supply is interrupted without notice on three or more occasions totalling more than 15 hours in any 12 month period we will give you £20 compensation in the case of domestic premises, or £25 in other cases unless:

- it was impractical for us to identify you as being affected, and you do not make a written claim for compensation within 3 months of the last interruption.

6 WATER PRESSURE

If your water pressure falls substantially below normal, please tell us. Once we have verified this is not due to an operational fault we will make an appointment to visit you within 3 working days. If we fail to do this we will pay you £20 compensation unless:

- you are unable to agree the appointment date, or
- you do not make a written claim for compensation within 3 months of us failing to meet the guaranteed standard

We will maintain a minimum of 7 metres in the communication pipe supplying your property. If the pressure falls below this

minimum for an hour or more on two occasions in any period of 28 days, we will pay you £25 compensation unless:

- you have already received a payment during the same financial year (our financial year runs from 1 April to 31 March): or
- it was impractical for us to identify you as being affected, and you do not make a written claim for compensation within 3 months of the second occasion of the fall in pressure; or

We do not have to maintain the minimum pressure when we are carrying out necessary work, or during droughts. So we will not pay compensation in these circumstances.

If you report a pressure problem to us and the problem is in the service pipe, we will investigate and deal with the problems on the pipes we are responsible for within 15 working days. We will pay you £20 if we fail to do this unless you cannot give us access to your property when we need it.

7 WATER QUALITY

If you tell us about a problem with the quality of your water, and we take a water sample to analyse, we will telephone you with the results as soon as they are available and we will give you a written report within 15 working days. If we don't meet this deadline, we will pay you £20 compensation.

8 METER READING

We guarantee to read your meter at least once each financial year (our financial year runs from 1 April to 31 March) and to send an invoice to you within 7 working days of reading the meter or estimating the meter reading. We will pay you £20 compensation if we fail to do this unless You, your employees or your agents prevent us from reading the meter.

9 INCORRECT COUNTY COURT CLAIM

If we issue a county court summons in error, we will withdraw the claim and write to you with confirmation. This letter will inform you that your account has been credited (£50 for county court claim in error, £100 for a judgement in error).

10 REPLACEMENT OF LEAD PIPES

If you intend to replace your lead supply pipe, we will replace our section (the communication pipe) at the same time providing you give us 5 working days notice. If we fail to do this we will pay you £20 compensation unless:

- you do not make a written claim for compensation within 3 months of us failing to meet the guaranteed standard.
- The delay is due to obtaining 3rd party permission for a highway excavation.

11 PAYING COMPENSATION

Compensation to which you are automatically entitled will be paid or credited to your account within 10 working days. If it isn't and you make a written claim for the compensation within 3 months, we will pay you the original compensation plus a further equivalent amount.

12 EXCEPTIONS

In all cases, if the failure is caused by severe weather, industrial action or the act of a third party, compensation will not be made.

If you owe us money and the debt is more than 6 weeks old we will pay you by crediting your account (this will reduce the amount outstanding). If you need to claim the compensation in writing, the 6-week period will start when we receive a letter from you. In all cases, the period will run from the date compensation became due.

Where to send your complaints and questions

If you have a question about your bill or you want to change how to pay, please write to:

Hartlepool Water
3 Lancaster Road
Hartlepool TS24 8LW or

Or email us at enquiries@hartlepoolwater.co.uk

If you do not write to the correct address you will not be entitled to compensation.

How to claim

In cases where you must write to us to claim compensation (para 11) or where you wish to complain about your sewerage services, write to the address below which deals with your particular claim:

Claims about your water supply and us not replying to either questions about our bills or written complaints.

Hartlepool Water
3 Lancaster Road
Hartlepool TS24 8LW
Email: gss@hartlepoolwater.co.uk

Claims or complaints about foul or surface water drainage (including blockages or flooding), sewage treatment and disposal and other claims.

Northumbrian Water
Customer Services
Wear House
Abbey Road
Pity Me
Durham DH1 5EZ

What we do with your claim

When we get your claim we will look back at our records to check the dates your claim is for. We will tell you the results of our investigation and if your claim is justified we will send you a cheque subject to the provisions of paragraph 11 'Paying Compensation'.

If you are not satisfied with the way we have dealt with your claim, you should make a complaint to us. For details of how to complain, please ask us for a copy of our 'Complaints Procedure' leaflet.

Disputes

If we do not think your claim is justified you can appeal to the Director General of Water Services who will then decide. This decision is binding on both parties. The address is:

The Director General
Office of Water Services
Centre City Tower
7 Hill Street
Birmingham B5 4UA