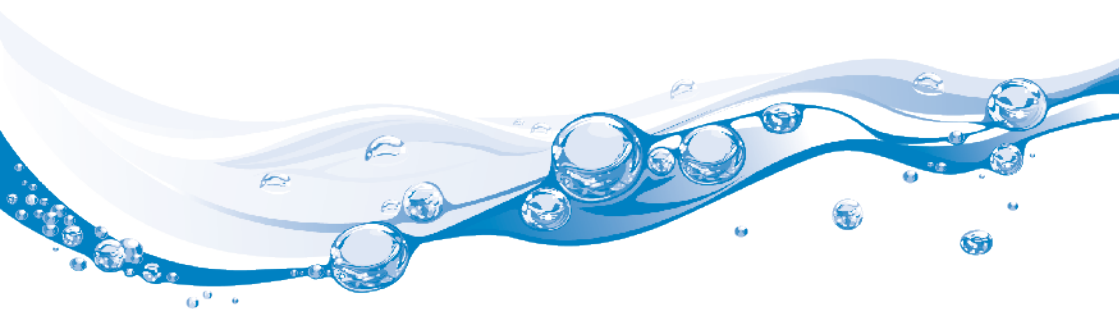




code of practice for  
**DOMESTIC CUSTOMERS**



November 2017



This Code of Practice informs you of the main services we provide, our commitment to our domestic customers and tells you where and how to get advice and help. This code makes up a suite of codes comprising of Customer, Leakage and Debt Recovery codes. Details of these codes, along with other leaflets and useful contact points can be found at the back of this booklet on pages 26 and 27.

Upon request, we can supply any of our codes, leaflets and booklets in a large print.

Telephone numbers and addresses can be found on page 27 of this booklet.

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The Water Industry Act 1991 enables all public water supply and sewerage services in England and Wales to be provided by private sector companies and provides for a strengthened framework of customer protection. Your individual statutory rights are maintained and strengthened under this Act, for example you can take civil action against us for any loss or damage sustained if we fail in our duty under the Act to supply water for domestic purposes. In addition to respecting your statutory rights we are also subject to different sets of controls as explained below.

Firstly, we operate under a licence which places a ceiling on the average annual price increase which we can charge through a formula related to movements in the Retail Prices Index. The independent Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat) ensures that we comply with this and other conditions of our appointment. Ofwat also has responsibility to ensure that customers interests are protected in respect of the quality of service we provide as well as our level of charges.

Secondly, the Secretary of State sets specific standards of drinking water quality which we have to observe and standards which we must meet when carrying out our basic water supply duties. It is a criminal offence to supply water unfit for human consumption, and proceedings can be taken against a company supplying such water by either the Secretary of State or the Director of Public Prosecutions. Drinking water quality standards are monitored by the Drinking Water Inspectorate.

Thirdly, the local Council's Environmental Health Officer also has responsibility for quality and health issues arising the use of water.

Finally, the Environment Agency regulates our abstraction of water from underground aquifers, rivers and other inland waters, under the provisions of the Water Reservoirs Act 1991.

The interests of our consumers are represented by an independent body - the Consumer Council for Water - London and South East. This Committee investigates complaints and provides advice and information to all water and sewerage consumers in the Southern Region. Contact details can be found on page 21.

Ofwat, Environmental Agency, Drinking Water Inspectorate and the Consumer Council for Water are overseen by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).



**Area of Supply**

We supply drinking water to an area stretching through Hampshire and West Sussex from the River Meon in the west to the River Arun in the east, encompassing 868km<sup>2</sup>. We serve a population of more than 640,000, plus a commercial market which includes many farms, defence establishments and other important industries.

Our Head Office is at Havant, along with our Operational Depot. Details of how to contact us can be found on page 27, along with other useful contacts.

We do not provide sewerage and sewage treatment. These services are normally the responsibility of Southern Water Services Ltd.

### Quality

85% of the water that we supply comes from springs and boreholes, with the remaining 15% from a source that we have on the River Itchen, near Southampton. All of our sources abstract water that has passed through the chalk hills of the South Downs and, accordingly, is hard. Hard water deposits limescale when heated which can cause fur in kettles, washing machines, showers and other devices that heat water. We produce a free leaflet, 'A Guide to Water Hardness and Limescale' available from Head Office or via our website.

We undertake to supply wholesome water for domestic use. The quality of the supply will comply with the European Community Directive as defined by The Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2000 (as amended in 2007) and be of sufficient quality to meet domestic purposes which means a supply for drinking, washing and sanitary purposes and the preparation of food.

We must sample and test public water supplies at regular intervals, which includes testing at customers taps. We have powers of entry, as laid down in legislation, in order to take water samples for testing purposes. Records of test results are kept and are monitored by the Drinking Water Inspectorate and are available for inspection by the public, free of charge, at our Head Office. If you want to know about the water quality in your supply zone please visit our website at [www.portsmouthwater.co.uk](http://www.portsmouthwater.co.uk). If water quality standards are breached, we can be prosecuted by the Drinking Water Inspectorate.

The 1999 Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations, enforced by Water Companies, help to prevent contamination of water supplies by ensuring that national standards for design, installation and maintenance of plumbing systems are adhered to. These regulations relate to internal plumbing which is not owned by us and is your responsibility to maintain, or may be your landlords if you are a tenant. Failure to

comply with these regulations can result in a fine. Contact us on 023 9249 9888 for further information and advice.

We produce a useful leaflet on Water Quality and the required Water Quality Standards which is available free of charge from our Head Office.

If you believe that your water has become unfit to drink or have concerns about the taste or smell of your water, please contact our Head Office immediately, or dial the emergency number, 023 9247 7999, if outside office hours.

**DO NOT DRINK TAP WATER UNTIL YOU HAVE SPOKEN TO US.**

Whenever we take a sample of your water following a complaint, we will provide you with written details of our findings within 10 working days. The sample will be taken at a mutually convenient time.

Exceptional circumstances could arise in which case it may be necessary to advise you not to use tap water or to boil it before you use it for drinking or cooking. We will tell you via the local media or in writing, whichever method allows us to broadcast the information as quickly as possible.

Independent advice on water quality is available from the Drinking Water Inspectorate or your local Environmental Health Officer.

If you have special needs we may be able to contact you by alternative means. Our booklet 'Service Plus' gives further details.

### Quantity

We must provide you with sufficient water for normal domestic purposes, i.e. drinking, washing, watering the garden with a watering can, etc. However, at times of exceptionally high demand we may have to restrict the use of hosepipes so that everyone can receive adequate

supplies for essential purposes. We have never needed to apply for a drought order and have not imposed a hosepipe ban apart from one occasion in 1976.

Our target is to ensure, whenever possible, that drought orders and hosepipe bans continue to be unnecessary. Every 5 years we produce a Water Resources Management Plan, which sets out how we intend to ensure reliable supplies into the future, whilst meeting the challenges that face us, including protection of the environment, population growth and uncertainties surrounding climate change. A copy of this plan is available via Head Office or our website.

In some circumstances, where large quantities of water are likely to be used, you are required to have a water meter. Please see pages 11 and 12 for the compulsory metering criteria and details of free meter options.

Whilst we intend to supply sufficient water to customers for normal domestic purposes, we also aim to do this in such a way that minimises our abstraction, for the benefit of the environment. Accordingly leakage management is an important company aim and charges based on what customers actually use, via the installation of a meter, are becoming increasingly common. Indeed, it is generally accepted that customers with a meter use 10% less water than those that pay by other means. We produce leaflet, Saving Water in the Home, which provides useful tips and information on water saving measures.

### **Pressure**

We must supply water at sufficient pressure which will ensure water reaches the topmost storey of every building unless the building is at such a height that the water will not flow to it by gravity.

We will, subject to certain exceptions listed below, maintain a constant supply to you at a

minimum pressure of 10 metres head measured at our stopcock which is normally at the boundary of the premises.

This pressure is sufficient to fill a storage tank which is normally located in the attic, and at a flow rate which will fill a 9 litre bucket in approximately one minute. Pressure and flow rates in your home can be affected by a number of factors:

- the height of the property above the water main and its height relative to the reservoir;
- the condition of the service pipe;
- whether the property shares a service pipe with other properties;
- peak demand conditions.

If you think that your water pressure is too low, please contact us on 023 9247 7999 and we will investigate free of charge during our working hours.

If the cause is our responsibility we will take appropriate action, which may include paying you compensation, if pressure falls below 7 metres, details of which are included on page 24 of this code. If not, we will tell you what you need to do.

### **Interruptions to Supply**

We aim to provide a constant supply of water. However, problems such as burst mains and the need to undertake planned maintenance will inevitably disrupt supplies.

If there has been a planned interruption to your water supply for any necessary works, we undertake to restore your supply within the period notified to you. Where the interruption as described above is for more than 4 hours we will notify you at least 48 hours before the supply is interrupted.

If the interruption of your supply is due to an emergency e.g. broken distribution mains and not a trunk main we will restore the supply within 12 hours, 48 hours for a trunk main.

Where an interruption lasts longer than 24 hours we must provide you with an emergency supply - normally from stand pipes or water tankers.

As part of our programme for checking leakage, we sometimes turn off sections of mains at night. These interruptions, which typically last less than half an hour, normally occur between midnight and 5 o'clock in the morning.

Potentially, supply interruptions could occur in times of severe drought, following the successful application by the Company to the Secretary of State for a drought order. In this unlikely event, mains supplies could be periodically replaced with stand pipes or water tankers. If this was to occur you may be entitled to a daily payment of £10, subject to certain conditions. However, our water resources plan aims to ensure that such supply interruptions are not necessary. Details of our Guaranteed Standards for Supply Interruptions are covered on page 23.

### Connections

We will connect all new premises to mains if you ask us, but you will have to pay the costs which will include:

- the charge for making the connection - and only we can do this.
- the charge for laying our part of the service pipe and installing the stopcock including excavation and reinstatement of the highway. Alternatively, you can arrange to undertake the excavation, installation and reinstatement, provided a licence and consent are obtained from the Highway Authority and the work is in accordance with our self lay policy.
- a fixed contribution (known as an infrastructure charge) to our overall costs

of making water supplies available. The infrastructure charge is payable for each new connection to a water supply as a contribution to the cost of increasing the capacity of the local mains network so that the increased demand placed on the system by new customers can be met. This charge, which does not necessarily have to be paid in advance, is a standard charge allowed under Section 146 of the Water Industry Act 1991 and our Licence Condition C.

A 'new connection' means connection, whether directly or through an intermediate pipe, to a water supply for premises which have not previously been connected to a supply of water provided by us and paid for by the owner or occupier, or in the case of a redevelopment, where the premises have not been connected in the last five years.

'Premises' includes any part of a building which is, or is designed, altered, or intended to be occupied as a separate unit.

The first thing you must do is complete an application form, obtainable from our Head Office. We can offer help and advice prior to inspecting the site and send you a quotation, telling you what you need to do before we will make the connection.

This will normally include:

- laying your part of the service pipe to water supply regulations requirements;
- paying our charges (other than the infrastructure charge which does not need to be paid in advance);
- providing a separate service pipe to each part of the building or premises that is separately occupied;
- ensuring that the plumbing water supply regulations are complied with;

— obtaining any necessary consents from other landowners.

New domestic connections to water mains will be completed after the above conditions have been met within fourteen days (or twenty one days if we have to lay our part of the service pipe). The Water Industry Act 1991 gives you the right to take legal proceedings against us if we fail to comply with the above duties.

Any disagreement between us about the charges and conditions for connections to the mains and disputes about mains requisitioning, can be referred to Ofwat for determination.

If we cannot supply your property from one of our mains, you and your neighbours may be able to ask for a new main to serve several properties. You and your neighbours must pay any difference between the income we get from charging for the water supplied from the new main and our costs in providing the main. When requesting a main, the payment options are (i) to pay 'relevant deficit charges' over a 12 year period, or (ii) to pay a single statutory commuted sum (calculated using the discounted aggregate deficit method). We may also need some security from you. Alternatively, you may appoint your own contractor to lay the main by means of a self lay arrangement. Please contact us on 023 9249 9888 for further details.

We will normally provide the main within 3 months of you agreeing that we do so. If we break this deadline and you suffer loss or damage as a result, you may have a legal claim against us. Records of where our mains are laid are held at our Head Office and are available for examination free of charge.

Portsmouth Water Ltd is not responsible for sewerage or sewage treatment. These are normally the responsibility of Southern Water Services Ltd. (their address and telephone number can be found on page 27). A separate charge is levied by the sewerage service provider

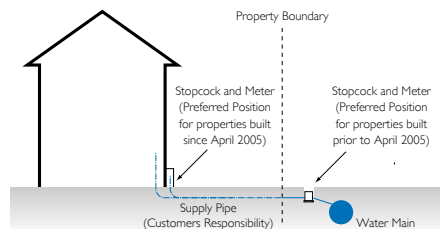
for their services including an infrastructure charge if applicable.

### Responsibility for Pipes

The water mains in the highway belong to us. Normally the service pipe from the mains to the boundary of your property is our responsibility. Most properties have an underground stopcock at the boundary and our pipe ends at the stopcock. The stopcock also belongs to us. We are responsible for its maintenance.

If the property is metered, the meter and its maintenance are our responsibility, regardless of where it is situated. You should not wilfully tamper with the meter as it is a criminal offence. Our booklet 'Switching to a Water Meter' provides further details, including our preferred location for installation. The remainder of the service pipe, taking the water into your house, is normally the property owner's responsibility, as illustrated in the diagram below. Sometimes your privately owned supply pipe may also supply some of your neighbours, with whom you will share responsibility for the pipe and its maintenance. If there is a water supply problem we may be able to help you identify on whose side of the boundary the problem lies. Contact our Head Office.

Under the Water Industry Act 1991 the Company has rights of access to lay and maintain mains in private land. The Company operates under a Code of Practice for the Exercise of Works on Land, a copy of which is available from our Head Office on request.



## Leaks

Water can be a scarce resource and we should all do what we can to avoid wasting it. Leaks from pipes can result in large water loss. In order to meet leakage targets set by Ofwat, and for the sake of the environment, we check for leaks on our part of the network. You should check for leaks within your pipework, including any privately owned pipes that you may share with your neighbours. You could look for high meter readings, damp areas on the ground in dry weather or lush vegetation during hot temperatures. If you are on a meter we recommend that, if able, you should take monthly meter readings in order to check for leaking pipes. If you suspect you have a leak or if you see a leak on the road please call our Freephone leakline 0800 434 6104.

If you think that there might be a leak on your supply and have a meter at or near your property's boundary, you can check if there is a leak. Take a meter reading and then either turn off your supply at your internal stopcock or make sure there is no water being used in the house (tap running, washing machine on etc). Wait one hour and take another reading. If the reading has increased you may have a leak on your external supply pipe. We offer a free leak detection service and you may qualify for a free repair, please contact us on 023 9247 7999 for further details.

If there is a leak on your pipe, it is your responsibility to repair it. Should a leak exist on a privately owned pipe you share with your neighbours, you and your neighbours will be responsible for its repair. If your pipe is leaking, we will ask you to repair it, but if you fail to do so we will carry out the repair and charge you the cost. If, in extreme cases, the leak endangers people or property we can cut off the supply until the leak is repaired.

We are currently offering to carry out up to two leak repairs on a domestic property free of charge, subject to certain conditions, please refer to Code of Practice and Procedures for Leakage

on Domestic Supplies leaflet to see if you qualify. Please note that this is not an emergency call out service and is applicable to external pipes only. If you have a leak within your house you should call a plumber.

If you have a water meter installed you pay for the volume of water you use, which may include leaks from your pipework. If a domestic property is metered we may give an allowance, based on past normal consumption, for the first leak which occurs, within the external supply pipe at the property. If, when fitting a meter at your property, a leak is detected we will repair it at our expense if it can be repaired without additional excavation. Otherwise it will be your responsibility to repair the leak, although often you will qualify for a free repair as mentioned above.

It is wise to protect against the possibility of burst pipes within your property. Bursts and other problems may arise due to frozen pipes in the winter and can be minimised by insulating pipes and water tanks, fixing dripping taps and turning off and draining down unused taps.

Our Code of Practice and Procedures for Leakage on Domestic Supplies, available free of charge from our Head Office, gives further details.

## Lead Pipes

Lead is commonly found in the environment. Prior to the 1970's lead was frequently used in plumbing. Accordingly, older properties may have a lead supply pipe from their kitchen tap to the water main in the road. We do treat our water in areas where lead is known to be common in order to reduce the amount of lead absorbed.

Lead taken in by the body accumulates over time and is known to cause harm. Especially at risk are children and babies who are particularly at risk because of the possible effect on mental development. If you would like us to sample your water to determine the level of lead within it, if any, free of charge, call 023 9249 9888.

Accordingly, whilst the water within our mains is lead free, water passing from our mains to customer's taps can absorb a small amount of lead. We will replace our lead service pipe free of charge, if you replace all your lead pipework. Please contact us for details. Local Authorities sometimes provide grants to assist customers who wish to replace their lead service pipe. Interested customers should contact their District, City or Borough Council.

### **Shared Service Pipes**

Some customers share a service pipe with one or more of their neighbours. If this pipe is in poor condition and affecting the quantity or pressure of the supply, we will normally require the property owners to share in the cost of replacing it with separate pipes. Normally we will also require separate service pipes instead of a shared pipe:-

- if one of the households on the shared pipe falls into payment arrears;
- if the houses are converted into a larger number of flats or homes;
- if the shared pipe has been interfered with;
- if the capacity of the pipe becomes inadequate.

Any dispute between us over the requirement for separate service pipes can be referred to Ofwat for determination. You may not be aware that you share pipes with your neighbours. If you experience low pressure at peak times it could well be that the supply is shared. If you are unsure whether you have a shared supply and would like to find out please contact us. We would be happy to survey your property to help you determine the supply arrangement.

### **Badly Rusted Service Pipes**

Galvanised steel service pipes can become badly rusted with time, and this may restrict flow and discolour the water. If this is the case, you may

like to consider replacing your service pipe with modern materials.

### **Electrical Earthing**

Safe earthing of electrical appliances in your house is your responsibility and your water service pipe should not be used for earthing your household electrical installation.

The provision of electrical earthing is not one of our services. Unfortunately, some houses, particularly those built before 1966, still rely on their water pipe as an earth. If your house is one of these, please remember that the increasing use of plastic water pipes reduces the effectiveness of your water pipe as an earth. You should consult your local electricity supply company or an approved electrician for advice on electrical earthing.

### **Protection of Water Supplies against Contamination**

The protection of water supplies is governed by the Water Regulations. These regulations are designed to prevent contamination in the water service pipes and distribution mains by preventing backflow, back siphonage and interconnections of water from other sources. It is our responsibility to ensure that these regulations are complied with and we have powers to enter your property in order to inspect your plumbing.

Abstracts from the regulations are available on request and should be referred to when carrying out any plumbing works, such as the installation of a washing machine, etc.

### **Compulsory Metering**

Since April 2005, all new domestic properties have been automatically metered. You are also required to have a water meter in the following circumstances:

- if garden watering is undertaken other than by hand;

- where the property has an automatically replenished swimming pool or pond with a capacity of more than 10,000 litres;
- for a double bath - that is any bath with a capacity over 230 litres/50 gallons;
- where a reverse osmosis type water softener system is fitted;
- For a Power Shower (pumped and multiheaded variety).

### **Meter Option**

If your property is served by a single supply pipe which supplies only you, you may choose to have your supply of water measured by a meter. Installation is free for your main home. We will carry out a free survey and give free advice to help you in your decision.

If your property has low occupancy or a high rateable value, you may save money by switching to a meter.

Our leaflet 'Switching to a Water Meter' details the meter option scheme and is available on our website at [www.portsmouthwater.co.uk](http://www.portsmouthwater.co.uk) and includes estimates of household water use in a year to assist you in estimating your measured water bill if you are considering switching to a meter.

You will have a one-off opportunity to revert to unmeasured charging up to one month after the issue of your fourth bill following installation or a period of 24 months following installation whichever is greater, provided that you do not fall within the compulsory metering criteria detailed above. Metered charges do, however, remain payable for the period during which your property was metered.

Please note that if a customer reverts to an unmeasured charge that we do not normally remove the meter. It remains in place as it may be

used in the future by a subsequent occupier or if the Company commences compulsory metering at some future time.

Where a meter cannot be installed at a reasonable expense you will be able to opt for an assessed charge. For one bedroom properties with a single occupier this charge is set at a level that assumes an annual usage of 55 cubic metres of water plus the domestic measured standing charge. In all other cases it is set at the average measured household charge. This charge will be applicable from the date on which the meter would have been installed.

Our leaflet 'Switching to a Water Meter' gives further details of the Company's meter option scheme and reversion policy. Call us on 023 9249 9666 for further details or to apply for a free meter.

### **How to Read Your Meter**

We recommend you read the meter at regular intervals and keep a note of the readings. By regularly checking your usage in this manner, you will quickly note any abnormally high usage which could mean that there is a leak.

Most customers have a meter situated in it's own meter box with a metal lid. Once you have located the meter, prise up the cover using a screwdriver, remove the polystyrene filler which is placed in the chamber to protect the meter from frost.

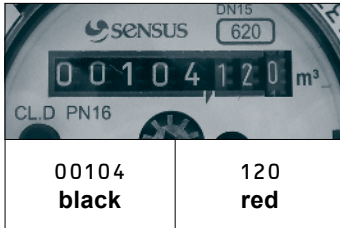
The meter dial will look something like the illustration below. You should only note the Black figures. These record the number of Cubic Metres you have used. The Red figures record parts of a Cubic Metre and are ignored for billing purposes.

Should your meter be situated under a large cover please contact us for assistance with reading as removing such covers is often a two person task requiring suitable training to undertake.

The meter in the illustration has recorded 104

Cubic Metres and 120 litres. Your bill would be based on 104 Cubic Metres only.

A Cubic Metre = 220 gallons.



Domestic meters are normally read on a six-monthly basis.

### Meter Siting

Meters can be fitted externally by the house, in the pavement, or internally. Our usual policy for properties built prior to April 2005, is to site the meter externally next to the stopcock, close to the property's boundary. Meters are fitted free in our preferred location. If you would like a different meter location to that offered, you will have to pay any additional costs. Alternatively, we can read your meter up to once a month for you free of charge and advise you of the reading.

If the meter is installed externally by you, or your agent, it must be sited in the garden, forecourt or drive in a position where it is easily accessible for reading. The fittings can be purchased from the Company and collected from our depot, or you can obtain the meter from the Company and the fittings elsewhere.

If a meter is installed by you or your agent it must be approved by the Company. We endeavour to fit your meter within one month of the request having been received. Where the Company is unable to install a meter within one month, it will ensure that the customer is no worse off as a result of this delay by making a retrospective adjustment to the unmeasured charges based on the first consumption reading.

### Meter Accuracy

The types of water meters used to measure domestic use are approved and tested for accuracy by the manufacturers before leaving the factory.

Water meters rarely over-record water consumption but if you believe your meter is inaccurate, you can ask us to test it. If your suspicions are confirmed, there will be no test fee and you will be given a refund if appropriate.

When calculating a refund we must assume that the meter has been over-recording your consumption since two readings prior to the event - the last occasion but one when we last read it - unless we can prove that the error began on a later date.

If the meter is accurate you will have to pay a test fee of an amount not exceeding £70 where the test is carried out by removing the meter from the premises, or in any other case not exceeding £20. Arrangements for a test can be made through our Distribution Department at Head Office. You will receive a copy of the test results.

Alternatively you can ask the Trading Standards Department of your local council to carry out an independent meter test.

We can also decide to test your meter. Should a malfunction be detected we may adjust your latest bill accordingly. Any adjustment will be based on how much you have used in the past when the meter was operating correctly.

### Tampering with Meters

The meter, and its maintenance are our responsibility. It is a criminal offence to interfere with the operation of a meter which has been installed for charging purposes.

### Vulnerable Customers - WaterSure Tariff

We have a special tariff for individually metered customers who have to use large amounts of

water. To be eligible for this tariff you must be on one of eight benefits and a person residing at your property must have a qualifying illness which requires the household to use an additional amount of water or you must have three or more children under the age of 19 living with you and in receipt of Child Benefit.

If you think you are eligible for this tariff, please call 023 9249 9888 for more help and an application form.

Assistance will take the form of a charge capped at the average household charge. Further details of this scheme can be found in our Scheme of Charges booklet.

### Helping Hand

If you have a low income or are in receipt of certain benefits you may be able to apply for our tariff, Helping Hand. To qualify for the Social Tariff you must have a household income of less than the Government's low income threshold, excluding the following benefits:

- Child Tax Credit
- Personal Independence Payment
- Mortgage Interest Relief
- Attendance Allowance
- Housing / Council Tax Benefit
- Disability Living Allowance

Water bills are then capped at our minimum charge for the year. If you think you qualify for this tariff, please visit our website, or call us to obtain an application form.

### Arrears Assist

If you have arrears on your account of £300.00 or more and have not been making regular payments to your account then it may be

possible apply for help under our Arrears Assist Scheme. Once your application has been approved, payments you make after this date we will match. Regular payments do need to be received in line with the arrangement we will agree with you. If you think you qualify for this scheme, please visit our website, or call us to obtain an application form.

### Changing Address

If you are going to change address and you pay by meter, you must give us at least 2 working days' notice so that we can record a final reading. If you fail to do so, you will be liable to pay our charges up to the earliest of:

- 28 days after you do notify us of your move; or
- the next planned meter reading date; or
- the date on which the new occupiers tell us they have moved in.

If you do not have a water meter and are changing address you should notify us of the date on which you are intending to move beforehand. In all cases please contact the Customer Services Department at our Head Office, who will arrange a refund or a credit on your account if appropriate.

### Company Representatives

Please remember that only duly authorised representatives of the Company are entitled to enter or visit premises for the purpose of examining water fittings, testing the water or making enquiries concerning water charges. All our representatives carry a Company Card with their photograph. They are usually in one of our Company vans. Always ask to see the identity card before letting anyone into your house. If you are doubtful, close the door and call us on 023 9247 7999. Anyone working for us won't mind waiting until you have checked them out.

For extra peace of mind you could always register to use a password when we arrange to visit. You choose a word, which will be used by the person calling at your house. Only you and our employee will know the password. If the person calling doesn't know the password, don't let them in.

### **Services Plus**

We have introduced special services which may be of particular help to some of our customers. These are:-

- a bill reading service over the telephone;
- a nominated contact facility, which allows someone else to deal with your account while you are unable to, e.g. through hospitalisation;
- leaflets, codes and bills in large print or, upon request, electronically;
- help with meter reading;
- password facility;
- special arrangements if your supply is interrupted.

Our booklet, 'Service Plus' gives full details of the services and a registration form. This is available, free of charge, by telephoning our Offices on 023 9249 9666 or online.

### **Water Efficiency**

We have a statutory obligation, under section 93A of the Water Industry Act 1991, to promote the efficient use of water by our customers.

We have produced a Water Efficiency Plan to explain how we will be fulfilling this duty. We recognise that, because water conservation is of such environmental importance, the efforts needed must be shared by us and our customers, so the plan also sets out how we ourselves will continue to play an effective part in ensuring that

water is used as efficiently as possible. A copy of the plan is available, free of charge, from our Head Office.

Our leaflet 'Save Water Now' details some simple ways of saving water in the home, which include:

- Turning off the tap when brushing your teeth
- Washing vegetables and salads in a bowl rather than under a running tap
- Only run washing machines and dishwashers with full loads
- Take a five minute shower rather than a bath
- Put a Save-a-Flush bag in your toilet cistern (contact us for a free bag)

We also offer some free water saving devices for the home which can be ordered via our website at [www.portsmouthwater.co.uk](http://www.portsmouthwater.co.uk).

Our Charges are published annually within our Scheme of Charges.

### **Water Tariffs**

Details of all our current charges are contained in our Scheme of Charges and are available from our Customer Services Department. We have standard charges (tariffs) for:

- water supply;
- connecting new properties to the water mains;
- disconnecting and re-connecting existing properties to the mains system.

If you are connected to mains sewerage, you will be billed separately for sewerage, usually by Southern Water Services Ltd, so you will need to contact them separately if you are moving home or if you wish to address queries and complaints concerning sewerage services and flooding from sewers. Their address and telephone number can be found on page 27. Southern Water are an entirely separate company to Portsmouth Water Ltd.

Most households pay water charges based on the rateable value of their home, but some may have a water meter. The meter is usually in a special stopcock box at the boundary of the property unless your property was built after April 2005, when it is usually mounted on the property wall.

Between 1st April 1990 and 1st April 2005, new properties were fitted with an external stopcock box with the facility for fitting a meter.

Since April 2005, all newly built properties have automatically been charged on a metered basis.

Charges will be payable by the occupier of the premises receiving or having access to the supply, or any person to whom the supply is made available.

In the case of premises subject to a short term tenancy, the Company may determine that the supply is made available to the landlord for business purposes and that the landlord should be liable to pay the water charges.

A person, who is not the occupier of the premises or is not the person to whom the supply is made available, may be liable to pay water charges in relation to those premises instead of the occupier by or under any statutory enactment or by agreement with the Company.

### **Price Changes**

Water Companies' annual tariff charges are regulated by Ofwat.

The amount we are allowed to charge over a five year period reflects our investment plans for maintenance and improvements in levels of service balanced by savings from efficiency targets set by Ofwat.

### **Unmeasured Bills**

Most water bills for customers without a meter consist of a fixed charge, (standing charge), plus a variable charge element based on the Rateable Value of the property. The domestic rating system was abolished on 31st March 1990. Subsequently, properties without a rateable value were charged a Licence Fee unless they chose to have a meter. Since April 2005, all new properties have been metered. Unmeasured customers are billed on an annual basis for the charging year July 1st - June 30th, with charges payable in advance.

### **Measured Bills**

If you live in a metered property, your account will comprise of fixed charges, (standing charge), which will vary depending on the size of your meter and an additional charge for each cubic metre (220 gallons) of water used. Standing Charges cover reading and maintaining your meter along with the cost of issuing bills to you. Metered bills are payable in arrears.

Half yearly bills are normally sent to ½" (15mm) and ¾" (20mm) and 1" (25mm) metered supplies. The size of your meter will normally have been determined when the supply was laid. The larger the meter the greater the amount of water that is available to meet your demands. Most domestic connections have ½" (15mm) meters. If you are unsure about the size of your meter we will be happy to arrange for a representative to call to answer any questions you may have. Meters 1½" (40mm) and over are billed quarterly or monthly.

Where access to read your meter has been restricted, we may issue an estimated bill to you, based upon past consumption. We can accept meter readings from customers, but seek to obtain at least one actual reading per annum.

### Payment Facilities

With the exception of Credit Card payments, we make no additional charges for any of the following payment methods.

- By Direct Debit - this is the easiest way to pay because the bank does all the work for you;

The Direct Debit method of payment is available to unmeasured customers and consists of 8 monthly payments. If you have a bank account and do not already pay by Direct Debit you can obtain an application form from us and upon completion and acceptance by your bank you can start paying by the Direct Debit method with your next bill. You may be able to set this arrangement up over the phone.

Metered customers may also pay by Direct Debit. They can opt to make one payment per bill or, if they prefer to pay by instalments, opt for a Budget Plan. The budget plan fixes monthly payments based on past consumption and is reviewed once a year.

- Payment by cash or cheque at any branch of Lloyds Bank - No charge will be made;

- Payment by cheque or cash at any branch of your own Bank or Building Society;

- By personal visit to our Head Office - You can pay by cash, cheque, Debit Card, Credit Card (a commission charge will be made). Please bring the whole account with you. Office hours are 8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday;

- At any PayPoint retailer - Customers who pay by instalments can make their payment at any PayPoint retailer free of charge.

- By Telephone to our Head Office - Monday to Friday 8.00am to 5.00pm. Payments may be made by Debit Card or Credit Card (A commission charge is made for Credit Cards). Please telephone 023 9249 9666;

- By Telephone with a Debit Card - Please telephone our 24 hour Freephone automated line on 0800 0480 021, and have your bill and card to hand at the time of the call;

- By Telephone with a Credit Card - Please telephone our 24 hour Freephone automated line on 0800 0480 021, and have your bill and card to hand at the time of the call. A commission charge will be made;

- By Telephone or Online Banking - When using your telephone or Online Banking arrangements, please quote your Account Number. Our Sort Code is 30-00-00 and our bank Account Number is 0239 0302;

- Via our website [www.portsmouthwater.co.uk](http://www.portsmouthwater.co.uk) payments by Debit Card or Credit Card can be made, although a commission charge is made for Credit Cards.

- By Water Direct - If you are having difficulty paying your bill and are claiming Income Support, Income Based Jobseekers Allowance, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance or Pension Credit,

Jobcentre Plus may allow the bill to be paid direct to us by deduction from your benefit. If you pay by this means, Jobcentre Plus will take a fixed amount from your benefit to pay any amount you owe in arrears and cover current charges. If you wish to use this facility, you should telephone or write to us, or contact your Jobcentre Plus Office direct. Alternatively, we may apply for Water Direct on your behalf. If we do so we will let you know.

With the exception of payments made by Direct Debit, payments may be made monthly, fortnightly or weekly by arrangement. Our normal terms for payment of accounts are yearly, six monthly or monthly over eight months, however, instalments can be arranged monthly, weekly or fortnightly.

A further explanation of these methods of payment can be found on the back of all our water bills, and within our Scheme of Charges.

If you find it hard to pay your bill by any of the above methods, you should come to us for advice. In some cases it is possible to find alternative methods of payment.

**IF YOU CANNOT PAY YOUR BILL IN FULL AND ON TIME** contact our Customer Services Department. The telephone numbers and address can be found on page 27. **DO NOT DELAY** - contact us as soon as you know you will have difficulty paying the bill. If you contact us we may be able to agree a personal arrangement such as alternative payments. Should it be the case that you are housebound, please contact us and we will arrange for someone to collect your payment.

We operate a Code of Practice on Debt Recovery which is available from our Head Office.

When domestic customers who are charged on a metered tariff receive a higher than normal bill due to a leaking supply pipe, then it may

be possible to adjust the charge on the first occurrence following installation of the meter.

For further information, please refer to our Code of Practice and Procedures for Leakage on Domestic Supplies which is available on request from our Head Office.

Some unmetered customers may be able to reduce their bills by switching to a meter, especially customers with a high rateable value or living in properties with a low occupancy level. Please see page 12 for details of the free meter option scheme.

If we fail to meet certain standards of service, you may be entitled to compensation. Please see page 23 for details of our Guaranteed Standards Scheme. If you have an enquiry, the address or telephone number to contact can be found on page 27.

If you are not satisfied with your initial response from us, please refer the matter to the Customer Services Manager.

### Account Queries

Account queries can be made, in person, by telephone, in writing or by e-mail.

In the case of a query in writing or by e-mail, we will dispatch a substantive reply to you within 10 working days from the date of receipt of the query. If you request a change to the arrangement by which payment is made and that request cannot be met, a substantive reply will be dispatched within 5 working days from the receipt of the request.

Should you have any complaints about our service please tell us as soon as possible. We will attempt to solve any telephone complaints straight away, recording the contact against your records. Where we cannot resolve your complaint immediately, we will arrange for a Manager to contact you at a mutually convenient time. Since our telephone calls are recorded, any such contacts are available for review.

We have Guaranteed Standards in respect of response times to written account queries, see page 23 for details.

### Complaints or Queries about Water Services

If you wish to make a complaint we recommend you put it in writing and send it to our Head Office:

Portsmouth Water Ltd  
PO Box 8  
West Street  
Havant  
Hampshire PO9 1LG

Sewerage services are normally supplied by Southern Water Services Ltd. Complaints concerning sewerage services should be addressed to them. Their telephone number is 0330 303 0277. Southern Water are an entirely separate company to Portsmouth Water.

Complaints may, of course, be made by telephoning 023 9249 9888 or in person at the above address. Telephone complaints and complaints in person will be handled immediately wherever possible by an appropriate member of staff, depending on the nature of the complaint. Sometimes it may be necessary for us to call you back or make an appointment prior to resolving the issue. If this is the case we will keep you regularly updated with how your complaint is progressing.

Hard of hearing customers can contact us on our minicom number 0845 758 5873.

Written complaints will be responded to by staff at Department Head level or above.

### Our Response to your Written Complaint

We have given an undertaking to customers under the Guaranteed Standards Service to reply in full to a letter of complaint concerning the provision of water services within 10 working days of receipt.

If appropriate a hold is placed on the account whilst a complaint is being processed. This ensures that no further reminders, etc. are issued pending our response to the complaint. In responding to a complaint we will use our best endeavours to:

- provide a satisfactory explanation and advise who to contact within the Company if you are dissatisfied with the response;

AND where appropriate:

- apologise and resolve the problem that

caused the complaint;

AND

- consider, without you having to claim, whether other redress such as rebate or compensation should be provided having regard to any loss, inconvenience or distress and worry experienced;

AND

- inform you which of the provisions for redress apply to their particular case in the event of their being dissatisfied with a response to a complaint.

### **Auditing the Complaints Procedure**

The Company Secretary is kept informed of complaints responses on a daily basis and receives monthly totals from the Registration Department detailing the number of complaints made in that period and the time taken to provide interim and substantive replies.

An analysis is made of complaints received with a view to revising internal practices and procedures, and the services provided by us, including the introduction of new ones if appropriate. This continuous monitoring and revision will ensure complaints are resolved whenever possible and should, hopefully, reduce the occurrence of further complaints.

### **Compensation if the Guaranteed Standard on Complaints is not met**

If we fail to meet the standards contained in the Guaranteed Standards Scheme (detailed on page 23) you will be entitled to a payment of £30. Where there is a balance outstanding on your account, this amount will be credited to it. Otherwise payment will be made by cash, cheque or a direct payment to your bank account. This payment is made automatically by us within 10 working days of our failure to meet the standard. If we fail to make the automatic £30 payment

within 10 days of it becoming due then you can write to claim a further £30 payment.

If you feel you may be entitled to a payment and do not automatically receive it you should write to us within three months of the relevant incident. Disputes about payments under the Scheme can be referred to the Ofwat at the address given below under 'Settling Disputes'.

### **What to do if you are Dissatisfied with a Response to your Complaint**

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your written complaint you have the right to an independent review by one of our Executive team, who would not have been involved in the original complaint process. If you would like such a review you should write to the Managing Director at our Head Office explaining why you remain dissatisfied. The Managing Director or one of the Executive team will respond to your letter within 10 working days.

In the unlikely event that you have followed the above procedures and are still dissatisfied with the responses, you may take the matter to Consumer Council for Water - London and South East. The members of this independent Committee are appointed by the Secretary of State and are drawn from the local community. There are regional committees throughout the country, each representing the interests of customers. The Committee investigates complaints and provides advice and information to all water and sewerage customers within their Region. Your letter should be addressed to the address below.

Consumer Council for Water  
London and South East  
1st Floor  
Victoria Square House  
Victoria Square  
Birmingham  
B2 4AJ  
Tel: 020 7931 8502

Lo-call: 0845 758 1658  
 Fax: 0121 345 1010  
 Email: londonandsoutheast@ccwater.org.uk

Your letter should be accompanied by copies of all correspondence on the complaint. Calls to the lo-call number will be charged at the local rate. Should you be unhappy with the way the Consumer Council for Water deal with your complaint, you can ask for it to be reviewed, in line with their complaints appeals process.

If your complaint remains unresolved after it has gone through all the stages of our Complaints Procedure and has been reviewed by the Consumer Council for Water, you may be eligible to take your concerns to WATRS, the Water Industry Redress Scheme, who can provide an independent and binding decision. Details on how and when to apply can be found at [www.watrs.org.uk](http://www.watrs.org.uk) or by calling 0207 520 3801. Further details can be found at our website [www.portsmouthwater.co.uk](http://www.portsmouthwater.co.uk).

Our leaflet, 'A Guide to Portsmouth Water's Complaints Procedure' is available from our Head Office. For a copy please telephone 023 9249 9666.

### Settling Disputes - Ofwat

Certain disputes can be referred to Ofwat to determine:

- Exercise of works on private land;
- Connections to water mains and associated works;
- Charges for requisitioned mains;
- Date the main is to be provided by (if more than 3 months);
- The connection point of service pipes;
- Terms and conditions of agreements for self-laid mains;
- Security deposits for connections to the water main and associated works;
- Refusal to provide a free meter;
- Providing separate service pipes for new supplies;
- Providing separate service pipes for existing supplies;
- Adoption of water mains;
- Disputes regarding our Guaranteed Standards Scheme

For more details, please contact us.

Ofwat's address is:

Ofwat  
 Centre City Tower  
 7 Hill Street  
 Birmingham  
 B5 4UA  
 Tel: 0121 625 1300  
 Fax: 0121 625 1400  
 Minicom: 0121 625 1422

Under the Water Industry Act 1991 you can have certain disputes decided by an independent 'source'. We can both choose the 'arbitrator' (person who decides on the matter), or, if we cannot agree, the Secretary of State for the Environment or Ofwat can choose one, depending on the type of dispute.

We offer an arbitration scheme which allows an independent arbitrator to be appointed to give a decision quickly and with the least fuss. All evidence is given in writing (so you don't need to make a court appearance). The arbitrator's written decision is legally binding on both you and us.

The disputes which can be decided by an arbitrator are relocation of meters and damage/loss caused by the Company's work in the street.

The 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 failing to comply with certain duties under the Act.

We endeavour to provide a speedy, efficient and satisfactory response to any complaints received. This procedure details the steps you should take should you have cause to complain. We will do all we can to resolve your complaint in the hope that the means of redress outlined above will not be necessary.

We are required by legislation to provide compensation to you in certain circumstances, as laid out in the Guaranteed Standards Regulations. Our payments go beyond the legislative requirements.

We guarantee to provide the following specific Standards of Service in our daily dealings with you and pay £30 compensation if we fall short.

### **Keeping of Appointments**

If we have to visit your home we will make an appointment am or pm (i.e. before or after 12.00pm) on a specific day, or if requested within a period of 2 hours in which the visit will be made. If we cannot keep the appointment we will let you know at least 24 hours in advance; either in writing or by telephone.

### **Responses to Enquiries about Bills and/or alternative Methods of Payment**

If you write to us with a query about the correctness of your account we will answer the query within 10 working days of receiving your letter.

If you write to ask us to change the way you pay your bill and we find we cannot make the change we will let you know within 5 working days from the date we receive your letter.

You are welcome to telephone with queries about bills and payment methods. Most queries can be answered immediately. Where this is not the case we will advise you when your query will be resolved. Please note, Guaranteed Standards payments do not apply to telephone queries.

### **Response to Written Complaints**

We shall respond to all written complaints concerning the provision of water services within 10 working days of receiving your complaint.

### **Meter Reading**

Where your meter is not read at least once in a 12 month period, provided access has not been denied, then a payment will be made.

### **Supply Interruptions**

Where a property suffers a supply interruption of more than 12 hours on more than three occasions in a 12 month period a payment will be made.

### **Restoration of Water Supplies**

If there has been a planned interruption of your water supply for any necessary works, we undertake to restore your supply within the period notified to you. Where the interruption as described above is for more than 4 hours we will notify you at least 48 hours before the supply is interrupted.

If the interruption of your supply is due to an emergency eg a broken distribution main and not a trunk main we will restore the supply within 12 hours, 48 hours for a trunk main.

If the interruption lasts longer than 24 hours we must provide you with an emergency supply - normally from standpipes or water tankers.

For customers with special needs, we will provide an emergency supply if the interruption lasts more than 24 hours. For more details see our 'Services for our Customers with Special Needs' booklet.

Where we fail to restore supplies by the notified time a payment will be made.

Where your water supply is interrupted you may be entitled to a further £10 for each additional 24 hours during which the supply remains unrestored.

### **Minimum Pressure Standard**

As part of our programme for checking leaks we sometimes turn off sections of mains pipe at night in a programmed way to identify the sections leaking. We usually do this between midnight and 5 o'clock in the morning. These interruptions usually last less than half an hour. If this is likely to cause you a specific problem please contact our local office. Because

the disruption is slight we won't tell you in advance nor do we regard this as a failure to meet standards.

We aim to maintain a minimum pressure of water in a communication pipe serving premises supplied 10 metres static head. In the event of pressure falling below 7 metres on two occasions, for more than one hour, within a 28 day period, a payment will be made. This payment will normally be made automatically. However, you will need to claim within 3 months of the payment becoming due, if we could not practically have identified your property as having suffered from loss of pressure as described above.

If you feel you have a problem with your pressure please contact our Head Office. We will investigate the matter free of charge and report back to you.

### **Failure to meet Standards**

If we fail to achieve these Standards of Service we guarantee an entitlement to a rebate in the form of credit against your bill, or by cheque or cash if no amount is outstanding.

Payments are £30, except in respect of restoration of water supplies where you are entitled to a further £10 for each additional 24 hours during which the supply remains unrestored.

We will not make certain payments where our failure to meet specified standards is due to severe or exceptional weather conditions, or due to other circumstances as laid down by the Government. Please contact us on 023 9249 9888 for further details.

Payments under this scheme do not affect any legal rights you may have, to take action for any loss or damage sustained and are made without prejudice in that they do not constitute an admission of liability on our part.

### **How to Claim**

The Guarantee payment for failure to meet our standards in respect of queries about your water service charges, keeping appointments, or complaints is made automatically within 10 working days of becoming payable. If we fail to make an automatic payment when due a further payment of £30 will become payable, but may need to be claimed by you.

We hope you will never have cause for complaint but if you feel you qualify for a £30 payment under one of the above standards, and have not received it automatically, you should write within 3 months of the incident giving rise to the claim.

The address to write to in respect of any claim is:

Claims Department  
Portsmouth Water Ltd  
PO Box 8  
West Street  
Havant  
Hampshire PO9 1LG

If we cannot accept your claim you are entitled to appeal to:

Ofwat  
Centre City Tower  
7 Hill Street  
Birmingham B5 4UA

The quality of the service you receive is as important to us as it is to you. A high quality service is a vital part of our business. We have always worked to high standards of service, which are reflected in the high level of satisfaction expressed by our customers.

This code contains details of our Guaranteed Standards Scheme and details the fixed payments which may be payable should we fail to meet the specific standards covered by the scheme. However all our standards of service are important and, as a general principle, our employees are encouraged to bring to the attention of their manager any occurrence or occasion which they think may warrant a compensation payment or credit to a customer.

We will consider any matter which we are aware of, and which may warrant a compensation payment, on its own merits and will assess it based on the individual facts, taking into account any loss, inconvenience, distress or worry caused by the unwarranted acts of the Company.

The following codes and leaflets are available free of charge from our Head Office. Company produced literature can be made available in large print.

**General**

Portsmouth Water - Information Leaflet  
The Farlington Filtration Plant  
The River Itchen Treatment Works  
Water Efficiency Plan

**Advisory**

Service Plus  
Saving Water Now  
Saving Water in your Business  
Saving Water in Schools  
A Guide to Water Hardness and Limescale  
Your Water Quality

**Water Charges**

Scheme of Charges  
Can't Pay Your Water Bill in Full?  
Application for Water Direct Payments  
Direct Debit  
Switching to a Water Meter  
Living with your New Meter  
Living with your Wall Mounted Meter

**Procedures and Codes**

Code of Practice & Procedures for Leakage on Domestic Supplies  
Code of Practice for Domestic Customers  
A Summary of Portsmouth Water's Complaints Procedures  
Code of Practice for the Exercise of Works on Land  
Code of Practice and Procedures on Debt for Domestic Customers

### Head Office

Portsmouth Water Limited  
PO Box 8  
West Street  
Havant  
Hampshire  
PO9 1LG  
Tel: 023 9249 9888  
Fax: 023 9245 3632  
E-mail: [headoffice@portsmouthwater.co.uk](mailto:headoffice@portsmouthwater.co.uk)  
[www.portsmouthwater.co.uk](http://www.portsmouthwater.co.uk)

### 24 Hour Emergency Service & Leaks

Operations Centre: 023 9247 7999  
Freephone Leakline: 0800 434 6104

### Customer Services Department

Water Account Enquiries: 023 9249 9666  
Water Quality Enquiries: 023 9249 9888  
Freephone Debt Line: 0800 432 0534

### Distribution Depot

Water Regulation Enquires: 023 9244 9088  
New Supplies: 023 9244 9088  
Mains and Service Repairs: 023 9244 9082

**All enquiries to the above numbers may be made between 8.30am-4.30pm (Monday to Friday)**

Southern Water  
Southern House  
Yeoman Road  
Worthing  
West Sussex  
BN13 3NX  
Tel: 0330 303 0277

Consumer Council for Water  
London and South East  
1st Floor  
Victoria Square House  
Victoria Square  
Birmingham  
B2 4AJ  
Tel: 0207 931 8502

Drinking Water Inspectorate  
Floor 2/A1  
Ashdown House  
123 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1E 6DE  
Tel: 020 7890 5956

The Environmental Agency  
Guildbourne House  
Chatsworth Road  
Worthing  
West Sussex  
BN1 1LD  
Tel: 01903 832000

Defra  
Customer Contact Unit  
Eastbury House  
30-34 Albert Embankment  
London  
SE1 7TL





