Portsmouth Water

Code of Practice

Domestic customers

How to contact us

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Introduction

Our Code of Practice tells you about the main services we provide, our commitment to our domestic customers and where and how you can get help and advice. We have a number of Codes of Practice which include:

- Leakage Code of Practice
- Debt Recovery Code of Practice

All of these can be found on our website.

Contents

3 **Introduction**

6 **Regulation of the water industry**

7 **Water supply services**

7 Area of supply

7 **Privacy notice**

8 **Water quality**

8 Water quality queries

9 **Metering**

10 Smart water meter installation

10 Appointments

10 Smart water meter installation on empty properties

11 No access charge

11 Unbilled properties

11 Requesting a water meter

12 How to read the water meter

12 Meter reading

13 Meter location for existing properties

13 External water meters

13 Internal water meters

13 Maintenance of meters

13 Meter accuracy

14 Tampering with meters

15 **Water supply**

15 New connections

16 Volume of water

16 Water pressure

18 Pipe responsibility

18 Shared service pipes

18 Pipe in poor condition

18 Lead pipes

19 Interruptions to supply

20 Water leaks

20 Spotting a leak

20 How we can help

22 Fixing a leak

22 Adjusting your bill

23 Electrical earthing

24 **Vulnerable customers**

24 Helping hand tariff

24 Watersure tariff

25 Arrears assist

25 Priority services register

25 Water efficiency

25 Company representatives

26 **Water charges**
26 Unmeasured bills
26 Measured bills
26 Billing frequency
27 Transition tariff
27 Empty properties
28 Payment facilities
29 Refunds
30 **Enquiries**
30 Account queries
31 **Guaranteed standards scheme**
32 **Complaints**
33 **Settling disputes**
34 **Key contact information**
35 **Other useful contacts**

Regulation of the water industry

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 a 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.

- We operate under a licence that places a limit on the charges that we can apply by putting a cap on the total revenue we can collect from our customers. 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 customer interests are protected in respect of the quality of service.
- The Secretary of State sets specific standards of drinking water quality which we have to observe and standards that we must meet when carrying out our basic water supply duties. Drinking water quality standards are monitored by the Drinking Water Inspectorate to ensure that public water supplies are safe and compliant with the legal standards. 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.
- The local Council's Environmental Health Officer also has responsibility for quality and health issues relating to the use of water.
- The Environment Agency regulates our abstraction of water from underground aquifers, rivers, and other inland waters, under the provisions of the Water Resources Act 1991.
- The interests of our consumers are represented by an independent body, the Consumer Council for Water. The Consumer Council for Water investigates complaints and provides advice and information to all water and sewerage consumers. You can find their contact details on page 35.
- Ofwat, the Environment Agency (EA), Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) and the Consumer Council for Water (CCW) are overseen by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra).

Water supply services

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 864km^2. We serve a population of more than 700,000, plus a commercial market which includes many farms, defence establishments, and other important industries. Our Head Office is in Havant, along with our operational teams.

We do not provide sewerage or sewage treatment services for customers. These services are normally the responsibility of Southern Water.

Privacy Notice

We are dedicated to safeguarding your privacy and ensuring your personal information is handled responsibly. All processing of personal information will be carried out in compliance with applicable data protection laws.

To find out more about the information we collect and your rights, please see our Privacy Notice at portsmouthwater.co.uk/legal-notice.

Water quality

90% of the water we supply comes from springs and boreholes, with the remaining 10% from a source that we have on the River Itchen, near Southampton.

The quality of the water supply complies with the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2016 (as amended 2018) and is of sufficient quality to meet domestic purposes which means a supply for drinking, washing and sanitary purposes and the preparation of food.

We sample and test public water supplies, which includes testing at customer taps. Records of test results are kept and monitored by the Drinking Water Inspectorate. If you would like to know about the water quality in your area, please visit our website.

Protection of water supplies against contamination

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

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 to inspect your plumbing.

Failure to comply with these regulations can result in a fine, restriction of the water supply, or disconnection.

Water Quality Queries

Advice on water quality queries is available on our website. If you have any concerns, please contact us.

On some occasions we may determine a water sample is needed. Whenever we take a sample of your water, 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 mean we need to advise you not to use tap water or to boil it before you use it for drinking or cooking. We would notify you in writing and through other communication channels if this situation occurs.

Metering

We are currently undertaking a universal metering programme. This commenced in 2025 and we aim to have this completed by 2033. We are installing smart water meters at properties, which transfer regular meter readings to us. Meter reads will be transferred hourly, and on some specific occasions every 15 minutes for a short period of time.

We will use hourly readings for several different activities:

- To enable you to see how much water you are using – monthly, daily and hourly.
- To help us create water usage reports and advice to help you save water.
- To compare your property's water usage with similar households in your area.
- To identify if we think your property has a water leak.
- For water usage analysis to inform our water efficiency projects across our area and help us manage periods of peak demand.
- To share water usage data with law enforcement agencies when required to do so for the purposes of preventing or detecting a crime.

We will use 15-minute readings in the following situations, which is a temporary change for up to a 48-hour period only:

- **Spotting leaks** – if we notice your consumption is increasing faster than normal, it may indicate that there is a problem with your supply. We will monitor your usage closely and contact you directly to let you know there could be an issue.
- **Diagnostic checks** – if we suspect our meter is not functioning as it should, we will use more granular data to investigate.

More information on how we collect and use your data when you have a Smart Water Meter can be found in our Smart Water Meter Privacy Notice at portsmouthwater.co.uk/legal-notice.

Smart Water Meter Installation

When installing a smart water meter as part of our universal metering programme, we will write to you before we complete our initial survey. During this survey, we may need to confirm you have a supply that only supplies you. To do this, we may need to run an outside tap or ask you to run a tap inside.

Once the survey has been completed, we will send you further information about the potential impact on your water charges, what type of meter installation we will be completing and how this might impact you.

We will provide you with a timescale for when the smart water meter will be installed. Once installed, we will leave some information about having a meter and accessing your water use information online. We will also inform your wastewater company to enable them to update their billing records accordingly.

If you already have a meter, we will upgrade this for a smart water meter. We will write to you to explain when we will be swapping the meter and when you can access your water use information online.

Appointments

Most of the time we will not need an appointment with you to complete our survey or meter installation. However, if an appointment is required, we will contact you to organise this at a time that is convenient for you. We offer morning or afternoon appointments Monday to Friday. Where requested, we can offer 2-hour appointment times.

Smart water meter installation on emapty properties

Where a property is recorded as empty on our billing system, we will progress with the installation of a smart water meter where possible. We will send correspondence to the address about the meter installation and leave some information once the meter has been installed.

Meter Pending Charge

To complete the installation of your smart water meter, we may need to schedule an appointment or access your property. If we are unable to reach you after multiple attempts, or we are prevented from installing a meter at your property (which may include internally) then we will apply our Meter Pending Charge, which is a fixed annual charge and may be a higher charge than you would pay than being on a water meter.

Whilst on this tariff, you will not be able to apply for other tariffs, such as our Helping Hand social tariff or assessed charge tariffs. To access our affordability tariffs, we will need to complete our meter installation survey and where possible, install a water meter.

If we are subsequently able to install the smart water meter, we will update your account to the appropriate tariff. This will be the Transition Tariff (Lowest Bill Promise) or the Standard Measured Tariff.

We are here to help make this process as smooth as possible.

If you would like to progress with the smart water meter installation, or have any questions, please get in touch.

Unbilled properties

During our visits to carry out surveys or installations, we occasionally come across properties that are not listed in our billing system. When this happens, we will set up a billing account for the property to ensure accurate and fair charging.

Charges may be backdated for up to six years, in line with industry guidelines. We will also notify the wastewater service provider so they can update their records accordingly.

Requesting a water meter

If you have fewer occupiers than bedrooms, or have a high rateable value, you could save money by asking for a water meter to be installed. This means you will pay for water you use, plus an annual standing charge.

You can request a water meter through our website, within your online account, or by calling us. We will complete a survey to establish if you have a supply pipe that supplies only you. If you do, we will either install a meter during our initial visit or upgrade our pipes and stop tap to enable a water meter to be installed.

If the supply pipe supplies you and some of your neighbours, or we are unable to install a water meter at a reasonable expense, we will contact you to confirm what the options are.

Where we can progress with the installation of a water meter, we aim to fit the meter within eight weeks of receiving your request. If we are unable to install a meter within eight weeks, we will make sure you are no worse off because of our delay by crediting you the value of the water charge for the period from the eight-week target to the date of meter installation.

We are in the process of installing smart water meters. Smart water meters take more regular meter readings to give you a better idea of how much water you are using and when. If you are in an area where there is coverage to enable us to receive smart meter data, you will have access to smart meter functionality, like more regular water consumption information. If you are outside this area, we will read the meter every six months. Once we have coverage in your area, the meter will be connected to the network.

If you request a water meter, you have a legal right to ask to return to your previous charging method within the first 12 months. However, because our region is officially designated as an area of serious water stress, we are metering all properties within our area of supply.

This means that even if you request to revert to your previous charging method, we will continue billing you based on your actual water usage, along with an annual standing charge. This approach helps us manage water resources more sustainably and fairly.

How to read the water meter

Where possible, for older analogue meters, we recommend you read the meter at regular intervals and keep a note of the readings. By reading your meter regularly you will quickly notice any high usage, which could mean there is a leak.

The meter is usually located in the footpath or your driveway. Once you have found the meter, open the cover using a screwdriver and remove the polystyrene filler, which is placed in the meter box to protect the meter from frost.

Most meters are located within their own meter box. However, some are in pits under a large metal cover that should only be removed with specialist equipment and training. If the meter supplying you is in one of those larger pits, and you would like us to take a reading, please contact us.

The meter dial will look something like the picture above. 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.

The meter in the picture has recorded 104 cubic metres and 120 litres. Your bill would be based on 104 cubic metres only. 1 cubic metre = 1,000 litres/220 gallons.

If you have a smart water meter there is no need to take regular meter readings.

We will receive the meter reading information, and you can access this on your online account. You can still check and read the smart meter if you want to.

Meter reading

If your meter is not smart, we will physically read your meter every six months and send you a bill for your water supply. We will inform your wastewater company of the meter reading for them to update their billing records accordingly. They will then send you a bill for your wastewater services.

If the meter is smart, then we will bill you every six months based on the smart water meter readings we receive.

Meter location for existing properties

Meters can be installed externally or internally. Between 1st April 1990 and 1st April 2005, new properties were fitted with an external boundary box with the facility for fitting a meter.

Since April 2005, all newly built properties are charged on a metered basis.

External water meters

Our preferred location for meter installation is outside the property. This means we have access to the meter and fittings to read the meter and maintain the meter. Our preferred options for meter installation externally, in order, are:

1. External fit into existing boundary box
2. External installation in the public highway
3. External installation on private property
4. External installation in a wall mounted meter box

Internal water meters

If we are unable to install a water meter outside the property, we may be able to install the water meter inside. Our preferred options for meter installation internally, in order, are:

1. Internally in a common service area (usually in flats)
2. Internally within the customer's property

Maintenance of meters

We will replace any meter that has stopped recording consumption, is damaged or is faulty. We will also fix or replace any of our pipework or fittings that are damaged or faulty.

We may at times implement programmes of meter replacement. This will be focused on replacing meters that are either close to or have exceeded the warranty period.

Depending on the amount of work needed to replace the meter, we may contact you to inform you of the work. However, in most cases we can do the work without disruption to you.

Meter accuracy

The types of water meters used to measure domestic water 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 depending if the test has been completed on site or off site. For further information on the fee please see our Scheme of Charges available on our website. Arrangements for a test can be made by calling our Network Team. 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. They may charge for this work.

We can also decide to test your meter. If a malfunction is 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

Tampering with water meters is a serious offence and you could be prosecuted under the Water Industry Act 1991. You should not remove the meter or carry out any work on it at any time without our permission.

We will recover the costs of any expense, loss or damage from any person tampering with our meter.

Water supply

New connections

When we receive an application for a new supply, we will complete an assessment to ensure we have the capacity to support the new connection. The costs of new connections can be found on our website.

- 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.

You can complete an application form for a new connection on our website.

We can offer help and advice beforehand to inspect the site and send you a quotation, telling you what you need to do before making 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 21 days (subject to obtaining a permit from the Local Authority if needed). 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 about the charges and conditions for connections to the mains and disputes about mains requisitioning can be referred to Ofwat.

We will normally provide the main within three 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.

Portsmouth Water Ltd is not responsible for sewerage, sewage treatment or making new connections for waste services. These are normally the responsibility of Southern Water Services Ltd. Southern Water is an entirely separate company to Portsmouth Water Ltd.

Volume of water

We must provide you with sufficient water for normal domestic purposes, i.e. drinking, washing, watering the garden with a watering can, etc. When installing a new external water meter, we will also fit a small but clever device. This device helps maintain a consistent water flow, even if there are changes in our wider network.

The device is designed to manage the flow of water to help save water. So, you should not notice any difference in how strong the water comes out of your taps. We will continue to meet our minimum water pressure commitment of 10 metres static head at the outside stop tap. By keeping the water flow steady, we can prevent excess water from being used.

If you do notice a change in pressure after we fit your meter, it is usually due to a few things. Sometimes the process of putting the meter in can stir up natural minerals in the pipe, or the main water stop tap was not fully turned back on. You can check that your stop tap is fully open and see if this helps. You can find more tips on our website.

If you find that these things have not helped, and that something has changed with your water flow, we will test this for you. If the results show that the pressure meets our commitment of 10 metres static head, we will not carry out any additional work or checks.

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 since one time in 1976.

Our target is to ensure, whenever possible, that drought orders and hosepipe bans continue to be unnecessary. Every five 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 a changing climate. A copy of this plan is available at Business Plan 2025-2030 | Portsmouth Water.

Water pressure

We must supply water at sufficient pressure to 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 maintain a constant supply to you at a minimum pressure of 10 static metres head, measured at our stop tap 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 at the first draw off point in the property. The first draw off point is usually the kitchen sink. Pressure and flow rates in your home can be affected by several factors, and sometimes these impact our

ability to maintain a minimum pressure of 10 static meters head:

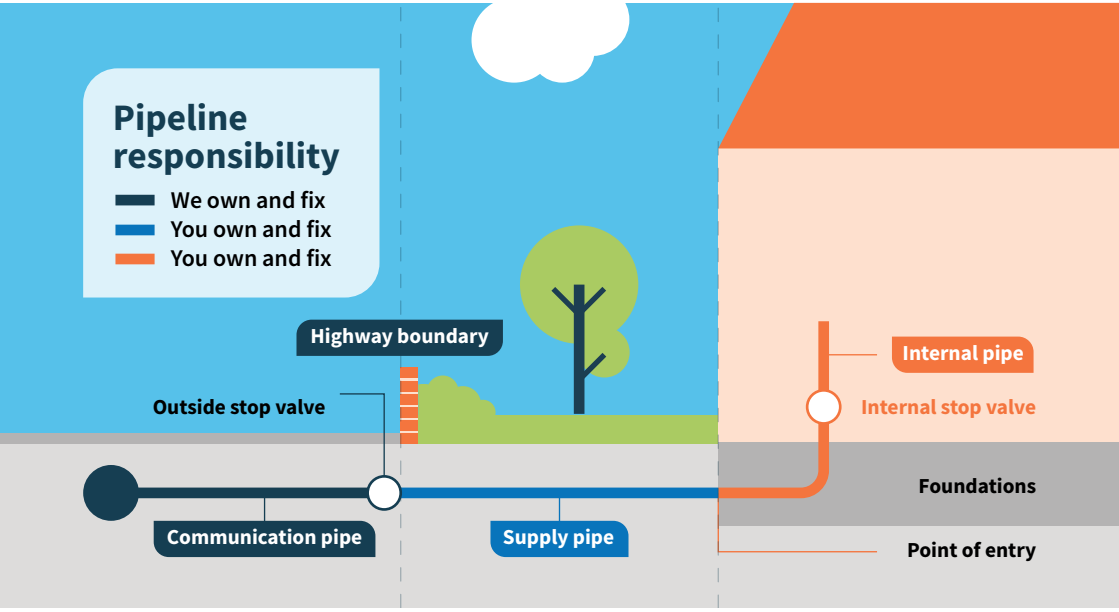
- The height of the property above the water main and its height relative to the reservoir;
- The condition of the service pipe;
- Whether the property shares a service pipe with other properties;
- Peak demand conditions.

If you think that your water pressure is lower than our minimum standard, please visit Pipework, Pressure & Leaks | Portsmouth Water. If the issue continues, please contact us and we can arrange a visit to check water pressure and flow at your property. If the cause is our responsibility we will take appropriate action. If not, we will advise you on what you can do.

Pipe responsibility

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 stop tap at the boundary and our pipe ends at the stop tap. The stop tap 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. 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.

Under the Water Industry Act 1991 the Company has rights of access to lay and maintain mains in private land.

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 volume or pressure of the water supply, we will normally require the property owners to share the cost of replacing the existing supply pipe with separate pipes for each property.

Other instances when we require separate service pipes to each property instead of a shared pipe are if:

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

Any dispute between us over the requirement for separate service pipes can be referred to Ofwat. 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.

Pipe in poor condition

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.

If we visit your property to investigate a leak and find your service pipe to be in a poor condition, we may advise you to replace the service pipe rather than spot fix the leak. This is because it is highly likely the service pipe will leak again in the future.

Lead pipes

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

It is very unlikely that the general population will be exposed to levels of lead high enough to cause adverse health effects. However, exposure to significant quantities of lead can be harmful to health, especially for unborn babies and young children. For this reason, it is important that lead levels in drinking water are kept down to the lowest levels.

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, if your supply pipe is lead.

If you suspect you may have lead pipes, we offer a free sampling service to determine the lead levels in your property. If you replace all your lead pipework, we will replace our lead service pipe free of charge. Please contact us through our website to find out more.

Interruptions to supply

We aim to provide a constant supply of water. However, on occasions your water supply may be interrupted. This might be for planned maintenance work or because of an emergency incident.

For planned work, we will provide you with reasonable notice of the water interruption. If the interruption is due to last more than 4 hours, we will give you 48 hours advance notice of this.

In an emergency event, we will keep our website and social media channels updated with current information, including, where possible, how long it might be until water supplies will be restored.

Where an interruption lasts longer than 24 hours we must provide you with an emergency supply, normally through a bottled water station or from 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 5am.

No notice of these interruptions will be given.

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 standpipes or water tankers. Our Water Resources Management Plan sets out how we plan to supply safe, reliable drinking water for the next 50 years and aims to ensure that such supply interruptions are not necessary.

Water leaks

Water is scarce, so it is important we all play our part in fixing leaks to ensure we are not wasting this precious resource. We ask our customers to help us by reporting any leaks on the road on our website.

We also ask you to help us protect our environment by fixing any leaks on your pipework or fittings. If leaks are left, they could damage your property. The cost of repairing the damage caused by a long-running leak is always far greater than dealing with the leak promptly.

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

Spotting a leak

Check for leaks by looking out for high meter readings, damp areas on the ground in dry weather or lush vegetation during hot temperatures.

If you have a meter, we will keep an eye on your meter readings and identify any substantial increases in water consumption. If you have a smart water meter, more frequent data means we can identify when water is being constantly recorded, which could indicate a leak. In both scenarios we will contact you to if we think you may have a leak. In some cases, we will organise to visit the property to find out where the leak is and what the next steps are.

How we can help

If, when fitting a meter at your property, a leak is detected within the boundary box, we will repair it at our expense if it can be repaired without additional excavation. If there is a leak on your service pipe or internal fittings, it is your responsibility to repair it.

For leaks on your service pipe, we can help you find the leak. If we find a leak, we can contribute up to £100 towards the cost of repair, or the value of the repair, whichever is lower. Alternatively, we can refund the insurance excess up to the value of £100.

If the pipe leaks again within five years, we will not offer any further financial support. If you choose to replace the whole service pipe, we can contribute up to £200 toward the work, or the value of the replacement, whichever is lower. Alternatively, we can refund the insurance excess up to the value of £200.

If the repair is not made within 30 days from identification of the leak, we will limit our contribution to 50% of the £100 or £200 depending on the work completed. If the repair is made after 60 days from identification, no contribution will be made.

If you rent your property, we will not financially contribute towards the cost of a pipe repair or replacement as it is the property owner's responsibility to repair the pipe.

Excellence in Water. Always.
Portsmouth Water

Fixing a leak

If you have a leak on your service pipe and are struggling to find someone to carry out the works, there are three local contractors on our website who may be able to assist you.

We also support WaterSafe, a free online directory and national accreditation body for competent and qualified plumbers, water supply pipe installers and other water services specialists in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. More information on WaterSafe is available on our website.

Fixing leaks is vital to help us protect our environment and secure water supplies for future generations. Wasting water is a breach of the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 and may lead to a criminal prosecution and a fine.

Leakage notices

If we have given you a Leakage Notice under the Water Industry Act 1991, it is to inform you that:

- We are aware that water is leaking from a water pipe or fitting that you are responsible for.
- You need to arrange the repair within a specified timescale, which may range from 7 days to 21 days depending on the severity of the leak, and the Leakage Notice issued.
- How to contact us for help or advice.
- What happens if you do not arrange the repair.

Enforcement action

- Failing to repair your private supply pipes and fittings which are leaking and wasting water is a criminal offence.
- If you do not comply with our request, we will serve a legal notice requiring a repair to be carried out.
- We are also able to carry out the leak repair ourselves using our powers under Section 75(9) (a) and (b) of the 1991 Water Industry Act and charge you reasonable expenses for carrying out the work.
- We have legal powers to disconnect (or restrict) your supply until the repairs have been carried out, in circumstances where the wastage of water becomes or causes an emergency, where the leak is excessive or where there is the risk of contamination, damage to property or harm to people.

Adjusting your bill

If you have a water meter installed, you pay for the volume of water you use. Any water lost through water leaks will be recorded through the meter and may be charged for.

In the following circumstances, a leak allowance will be applied for a maximum of the last 12 months or two measured bills.

- If you are a household customer
- Where you are supplied by a meter
- Where a leak occurs on the service pipe
- The leak has been repaired within 30 days from identification
- No other leak allowances have given in the last five years for the same property

To calculate the allowance, we will do one of three things:

- Use your corresponding historical water use to calculate 'normal' water use for your household
- Obtain two meter reads at least seven days apart to calculate 'normal' water use for your household
- Use industry averages based on number of occupiers to calculate the estimated water use for your household

Once we have calculated the allowance, we will contact you so you can decide if you would like the allowance to be applied or if you would rather pay for the water lost due to the leak, and reserve the use of an allowance in case of any further water supply pipe leaks.

To be clear, no allowances are applied for any internal leaks that occur.

We will also advise your wastewater provider so that they can also provide an allowance for the wastewater element they charge you for directly.

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.

Vulnerable customers

Helping Hand social tariff

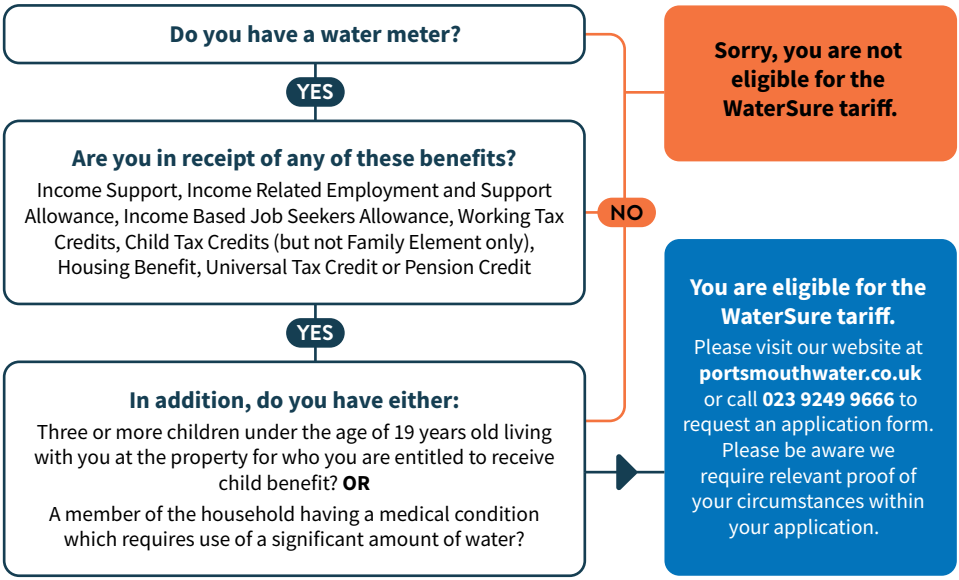
Helping Hand is a lower cost tariff for customers who have a household income of £22,020 or under and receive certain benefits. If you apply and your application is successful, your water bill will be capped at our minimum charge for the year. To qualify for the Helping Hand Social Tariff, you must have a household income of less than the Government's low income threshold. If any of the following benefits take your household income over the threshold, you will still be eligible:

- Universal Credit – Child and housing cost elements
- Housing / Council Tax Benefit
- Disability Living Allowance
- Attendance Allowance
- Pension Credit
- Mortgage Interest Relief

WaterSure Tariff

For those that meet the criteria, the WaterSure Tariff can help by putting a cap on your water bill at the average metered bill amount.

Are you eligible for the WaterSure tariff?



Arrears Assist

If you have £300 or more outstanding to pay on your account and have been unable to make regular payments, and no payments in the last 12 months, it may be possible for you to apply for help under our Arrears Assist Scheme.

To apply please complete the application form online.

Alternatively, you can print the form and return this to us via email to hi@portsmouthwater.co.uk, or return to us at: **Portsmouth Water Ltd, PO Box 99, West Street, Havant, Hampshire, PO9 1LG**

If you require any help in completing the application, then please get in touch via phone or email.

Priority Services Register

We are committed to helping our customers who may need extra support either in the long or short term. Joining our confidential Priority Services Register helps us prioritise customers who need extra support when communicating with us or during any service disruption to the water supply. Being on the register means our employees know about any special circumstances or needs you may have.

The register covers needs that may be temporary (such as after an operation or illness), or some may be longer term or chronic conditions. It also includes our elderly customers or those with children under five. Our Priority Services Register is available to everyone that meets the list of eligibility criteria.

Some customers have essential needs that require dedicated support. If you have one of the following specific needs, you will be added to our Core Priority Services Register. This helps us prioritise those who need support the most, especially during a loss of water supply.

- Require constant access to water
- Need us to provide bills in an alternative format such as large print or braille
- Have a nominee in place

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 lots of helpful tips on how to save water in the home on our website, and we may contact you to suggest or promote water saving tips or ideas. We also provide access to water efficiency support and retrofit devices through our website.

Company representatives

Only authorised representatives of the Company are entitled to enter or visit premises for the purpose of examining water fittings, testing the water, making enquiries concerning water charges or delivering bottled water during any incident.

All our representatives carry a Company ID 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 will not 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 at your home does not know the password, do not let them in.

Water charges

Details of all our current charges are available in our Household Customers Scheme of Charges published annually on our website.

Households pay water charges either based on usage through a water meter, or when a meter has not yet been installed by rateable value of their home. Where a meter cannot be installed, an assessed tariff may be applied. The meter is usually in a box at the boundary of the property unless your property was built after April 2005, when it is usually in a box mounted on the property wall.

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.

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.

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

Water companies' annual 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 1st April to 31 March, with charges payable in advance.

Measured bills

If you live in a metered property, your bills 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 (1,000 litres/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.

Billing frequency

Domestic household customers normally receive six monthly bills.

Where access to read your meter has been restricted, or we have been unable to obtain a smart meter reading, we may issue an estimated bill to you based on your historic consumption. We are happy to have meter readings provided by you, but we are obliged to obtain at least one actual meter reading in a 13-month period.

Lowest Bill Promise

If we have let you know you are moving to metering, we are providing a Lowest Bill Promise to give you peace of mind.

For the first 12 months with a meter, we will charge you whichever is lower; the charges with or without a meter.

- Your bills may change with a meter compared to your current charges.
- Your future bills will be every six months, based on how much water you use.
- You will see a comparison in each bill during this period to keep you informed.
- If your metered charge is higher, we will work with you to help keep your water bill as low as possible.
- Your wastewater company, usually Southern Water, will also base your wastewater bills on your meter readings.
- If you pay by Direct Debit or have a payment plan, your schedule will continue as normal.

Empty properties

Where a property is furnished and the water supply is available, water charges will remain payable. If the water supply is turned off, or the property is unfurnished with no water being used, no water charges will be payable. No retrospective changes are given.

The Company may choose to fit a meter to empty unmetered properties. Thereafter water charges will be calculated on a measured basis.

Where a property has a water meter and water consumption is recorded, we will try to identify the occupier or owner and register them at the property for payment of water charges.

Payment facilities

Our normal terms for payment of accounts are yearly, six monthly or monthly over 12 months. Instalments can be arranged monthly, weekly, or fortnightly.

If you find it hard to pay your bill, you should come to us for advice. We will work with you to put in place a payment arrangement that meets your needs.

There are a number of ways you can pay your bill.

Direct Debit

Payments can be spread with a monthly Direct Debit at no additional charge, or you can pay the annual amount after your bill has been sent to you.

If you have not paid by Direct Debit before, you can set this up from your online account. Select the date you would like your Direct Debit to be taken from your account and stay in control of your outgoings.

Pay by phone

You can pay your bill 24 hours a day, 7 days a week using our automated telephone payments line, by calling our free phone number **0800 048 0021**. You can also call us to make a payment over the phone.

No additional charges are made for payments received by debit or credit cards.

You will need your most recent bill and customer reference number.

Pay online

You can pay your bill on your online account or on our website. Both accept most major credit and debit cards.

No additional charges are made for payments received by debit or credit cards. You will need your most recent bill and customer reference number.

Pay by BACS or online banking

You can arrange to make payments by online banking to our Lloyds Bank. Please remember to quote your reference number when making payments.

Sort code: 30-00-00
Account number: 02390302

At any PayPoint retailer

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

Pay by cash

You can make a payment by cash at any branch of Lloyds Bank or your own bank using the payment slip provided at the bottom of your bill.

There is no charge for this service.

By Water Direct

If you are having difficulty paying your bill and are claiming one of the following benefits, Jobcentre Plus may allow the bill to be paid direct to us by deduction from your benefit:

- Income Support
- Income Based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment
- Pension Credit

If you pay by this means, Jobcentre Plus will take a fixed amount from your benefit to pay us an amount to cover what you owe 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.

Refunds

If you have a meter and pay by Direct Debit, your payments will build a credit to cover your next bill. Ifa large credit is accumulated over time, you can ask for a refund. We will check:

- There is enough credit on your account to cover your next bill only
- There are no other accounts you are responsible for with an outstanding balance
- If a new bill will be due in the next two months
- If you pay by Direct Debit, whether the payment amounts need to be altered

If you move house and your new property is not supplied by us, we will refund you any overpayment.

All refunds are paid back into your bank account. If we have your bank details already on record, we will automatically refund any overpayments back to you. If we do not have your bank details, we will contact you to obtain them.

Enquiries

You can manage most of your billing transactions on your online account or on our website, but you can also contact us by:

- Live Chat
- Email
- Phone
- In person

We can resolve most queries at the point you contact us.

Account queries

If you contact us by Live Chat, phone or in person, we will do all we can to resolve your query at that point.

In the case of a query in writing or by email, we will respond to your query within 10 working days from the day after we have received your query. If you request a change to the arrangement your payment is made and that request cannot be met, we will let you know within five working days from the day after we have received your query.

Guaranteed Standards Scheme

We are required by legislation to provide compensation to you in certain circumstances, as laid out in the Guaranteed Standards Regulations. The Guaranteed Standards Regulations cover the following areas. For more details on when and how much compensation is due, please visit our website.

- Appointments
- Notice of planned supply interruption
- Restoration of water supplies
- Minimum pressure standard
- Responses to enquiries about bills and/or alternative methods of payment
- Core Priority Services
- Water quality notices
- Household customers that owe Portsmouth Water money
- Moving to measured charging for supply of water
- Reading meters
- Complaints

Complaints

If you have any complaints about our service, please tell us as soon as possible. You can make a complaint by any of the contact channels we have such as phone, Live Chat, email, letter or webform.

We will attempt to resolve any phone or Live Chat complaints straight away, recording the contact against your records. Where we cannot resolve your complaint immediately, we will arrange for a senior member of our team to contact you at a mutually convenient time. Our phone calls are recorded, and any such calls are available for review. We also retain Live Chat transcripts for review.

For email or webform complaints, we aim to respond within five working days and have an obligation to respond to your complaint within 10 working days.

If you remain unhappy with our response, you can escalate your complaint. If after a stage two complaint you remain dissatisfied, you can escalate your complaint to the Consumer Council for Water (CCW). Please see our complaint guidance on our website for more information about our complaint process.

Settling disputes

Certain disputes can be referred to Ofwat to determine. These are:

- Carrying out 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.

Key contact information

Portsmouth Water Customer Services

Portsmouth Water Limited,
PO Box 99,
West Street,
Havant Hampshire,
PO9 1LG

portsmouthwater.co.uk

hi@portsmouthwater.co.uk

Water Account Enquiries

8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

023 9249 9666

Freephone Debt Line

0800 432 0534

24 Hour Freephone Automated Payment Line

0800 0480021

24 Hour Emergency Service and Reporting of Leaks

023 9247 7999

Freephone Leak Line

0800 434 6104

Water Regulation Enquiries

023 9244 9088

New Supplies

023 9244 9088

Mains & Service Repairs

023 9244 9082

Other useful contacts

Southern Water

Southern House,
Yeoman Road Worthing,
West Sussex,
BN13 3NX

0330 303 0277

Consumer Council for Water (CCW)

23 Stephenson Street,
Birmingham,
B2 4BH

Or via the online form at
ccw.org.uk/contact-us/

0300 034 2222 (calls to this number will be charged at the local rate)

Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI)

Ground Floor, SW,
Seacole Building,
2 Marsham Street,
London,
SW1P 4DF

0330 041 6501

The Environment Agency

Teville Gate House,
Railway Approach,
Worthing,
BN11 1UR

0370 850 6506

Defra Customer

Ministerial Contact Unit,
Defra,
Seacole Building,
2 Marsham Street,
London,
SW1P 4DF

enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

03708 506506