

# Customer code of practice

March 2024

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## 1 Introduction: our customer promises

This integrated customer code of practice explains the service levels our household customers can expect when they are served by mua Water. It also explains the compensation we will offer to customers if we fail to deliver on our promises.

At mua Water, we want to offer consistently high standards of service to our customers and are constantly aiming to improve the service we offer. Our standards of service must be at least as good as your local supplier. We will seek to at least match the local supplier's performance and exceed it where we can.

As a multi-utility last mile company, we will seek to innovate, based on our experience and understanding of other industries so that we bring you the best service possible as efficiently as possible.

This document sets out all of our household customer promises and policies in one place, including information about our service standards, and what we will do to put things right if you need to complain to us or if our service falls short of the high standards you expect from us. Our codes of practice on customer debt and leakage are also published separately.

## 2 Contacting mua Water

We are mua Water, the independent water and wastewater services company operating in your area. We own and operate water, gas and electricity last-mile networks across the North and Midlands of England and are owned by SGN and Murphy Group.

You can contact us in the following ways:

- You can e-mail us at [developerservices@muagroup.co.uk](mailto:developerservices@muagroup.co.uk)
- You can call us on 0333 000 0001
- You can log a query on our website: [muagroup.co.uk](http://muagroup.co.uk)

Our office hours for billing and account queries are 9am to 5.30pm Monday-Friday, excluding bank holidays.

In an emergency, you can call our 24-hour emergency number on 0800 011 4193 or 01543 466 711.

## 3 Your water supply

### 3.1 Drinking water quality

Water customers consistently prioritise safe, clean drinking water as a top priority for water companies to deliver and maintain. Meeting our drinking water obligations is a fundamental priority for us and is central to our operations.

The quality of your drinking water is regulated by the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) and must meet high standards of quality set by Government based on international standards recommended by the World Health Organisation. The water we provide must meet strict chemical and microbiological standards and must be acceptable to our customers with respect to its taste, odour and colour.

We must regularly sample and analyse the water at our customers' taps at random throughout the year to make sure that we are maintaining the high standards that our customers and Government expect of us. We will provide information about the drinking water quality in your area on our website and can also send it to you on request. We will operate and maintain our network so that it is fit to provide you with high-quality drinking water.

If one of our samples fails a test we need to investigate, report our findings to DWI, and work to put right any problems that we identify with the supply.

If you have a question about your drinking water supply or want to raise a complaint, please contact us on 01543 466 711 or via our website at [muagroup.co.uk/contact](https://muagroup.co.uk/contact).

Sometimes the appearance or quality of your drinking water can be temporarily affected by work going on our network or nearby. If you have any concerns about the appearance, taste or odour of your water you should contact us straight away and avoid drinking the water if you suspect there is a problem.

On very rare occasions, we may need to issue boil water, do not drink or do not use notices because of an operational issue or event on our network or nearby. We will tell you as soon as possible if a problem arises with your supply that means you should not use the water or that you need to boil it first. If we need to do this, we will call door to door to give the notices to you, and make sure that you are aware of what you need to do. In such instances, the problem may well affect a wider region and we will need to work closely with other local water companies, public health authorities and medical experts as we resolve the situation.

### **3.2 Water fittings in your property**

To protect our drinking water supply to you, there are regulations in place setting out national requirements for the design, installation and maintenance of plumbing systems, water fittings and water-using appliances. Their purpose is to prevent misuse, waste, under consumption or erroneous measurement of water and, most importantly, to prevent contamination of drinking water.

We are required to enforce these regulations through inspecting new build properties connecting to our network and periodically reinspecting properties that we consider having a high risk of having non-compliance water fittings installed. If we find non-compliant water fittings that pose a risk to public health, the water supply may be disconnected to the property immediately to protect water quality and ensure safety. It is a criminal offence to breach the Regulations and offenders may face prosecution. We will also require you to make good any non-compliant fittings or poorly installed water fittings.

We have statutory rights to enter a customer's premises to investigate compliance of a customer's water fittings, take samples, carry out surveys and work. We will do this within reasonable hours unless it is an emergency. We will give you 24 hours' notice for routing investigations of water fittings compliance visits and seven days' notice in all other cases. You have the right to refuse entry if we haven't given you notice.

We want to safeguard you against bogus callers. If you have a door chain, you should use it when you answer the door and ask the caller to show you their name badge. Our operations staff will wear mua Water identification badges. If you are still unsure you can call us on our 24-hour operations line on 01543 466 711 to verify the caller's identity. Our staff will always be happy to wait while you do this. If you have asked for priority services (see section 6) we may have given you a dedicated password that our operations staff must use if they visit you – you can ask the caller to give you the password.

### 3.3 Water pressure

We aim to supply water at the stop tap on the boundary of your property at a minimum pressure and flow to ensure a minimum flow from a ground-floor tap of 9 litres of flow per minute (or 30 seconds to fill a one-gallon watering can). This is the flow on the ground floor and will decrease on upper levels of your property. Our water pressure should be at least seven metres static head at the stop tap.

You may experience lower water pressure for a number of reasons, including if the height of your property exceeds the height of the local service reservoir, if there are local network issues, in dry weather at peak demand.

If you think your mains pressure is too low, please contact us on 01543 466 711 or [developerservices@muagroup.co.uk](mailto:developerservices@muagroup.co.uk) and we will investigate. Low pressure can be caused by a number of factors that may be to do with our network or the way your plumbing is set up. Pressure and flow are not always closely related, and we will usually need to investigate the cause of your problem. If the pressure is too low either in general or at specific times on our network, we will take action to improve your experience. If it is to do with your plumbing, we will advise you on what we think could make a difference.

If we provide water to property below seven metres of static head (in the communication pipe) on two occasions lasting at least one hour each within a 28-day period, you are automatically entitled to compensation as set out in section 6 – our guaranteed standards. We will make up to one payment per customer per year. As pressure issues can be transient on water networks, it can be difficult to identify customers automatically, so it is important that you ask us to investigate if you suspect that your water pressure is too low.

### 3.4 Supply interruptions

We have a duty to provide a constant supply. However, sometimes operational events on our network and nearby mean that we may need to turn your supply off for a period to carry out work on our network. If we do this, we will try to minimise the time taken so that we minimise the impact on our service to you. There may also be unplanned interruptions on our network, for example, due to burst mains either locally or in the surrounding area. We will strive to fix unplanned interruptions as quickly as possible to minimise the impact.

We will give you notice if we plan to cut your supply off so that you can prepare. If we expect the interruption to last four hours or more, we will give you at least 48 hours' notice of our plans. If your circumstances mean you need extra support during a restriction in supply, you can let us know what you need and we will help where we can (see Section 7 Priority Services).

For unplanned interruptions we should restore supplies within 12 hours, and within 48 hours in emergency situations. If you have no water, please call us on 01543 466 711. We will investigate and get your supply restored as soon as we can, working with regional companies if the interruption is across a wider area.

### **3.5 Drought**

We aim to provide sufficient water to meet your normal household needs, including in dry weather. However, if there are long periods of low rainfall this can lead to pressures on the water environment and the sustainability of the water resources that we all rely on for our essential needs. This is made worse by climate change and the increasingly variable weather that comes with it – droughts in the future may be more severe and prolonged than they have been in the past.

It is important that we all look after this precious resource so that we can maintain a sustainable supply for generations to come. We have a duty to promote the efficient use of water, which includes working with you to help you use water wisely and not waste it. If we work together to use water efficiently, we can reduce the pressures we place on the environment at times when low rainfall is causing environmental stress.

Although we do not anticipate having to do so, there may be times when prolonged stress on the environment means we need to put restrictions in place to protect nature and our future supplies. This might include restrictions on your use of sprinklers and hosepipes. If we do need to put restrictions in place it is likely to be due to a regional drought and we will be working closely with other companies and our environmental regulators to do the right thing. We will play our part in saving water during a drought by paying particular attention to finding and fixing leaks on our network.

### **3.6 New connections**

We must connect all new household premises, and premises that use water for domestic purposes within our operating area to our water mains if you ask us to do so. Connections can also be carried out by an independent approved contractor (or self-lay provider who must be WIRS accredited and listed on the Lloyds register) if authorised in advance.

As we mainly operate on new build housing sites, we do not expect to receive new connection requests in the normal course of business. If we are requested to do so, we will honour all relevant requests, according to the approach set out in our new connections charging arrangements document.

For all new connections, you must pay an infrastructure charge which is a fixed contribution towards additional investment in our local distribution system and the wider local area. The charge is in addition to the actual cost of making a connection.

Infrastructure charges are intended to make sure that the costs of the investment are met from a one-off charge to new properties as and when they are connected rather than from higher charges to existing properties. The maximum infrastructure charge for a domestic supply is governed by Ofwat charging rules and the charges must broadly reflect the cost of local network expansion needed to support new connections over time.

All new connections are metered and will be charged on our published measured tariffs.

We may also need to divert mains as a result of new properties being built or extensions to existing properties.

## 4 Sewerage services

### 4.1 Our sewerage network

We are responsible for a number of assets in your local area. These include:

- **Foul sewerage** – pipes we are responsible for which take waste from the toilets, sinks and other water-using devices in your property away to be treated.
- **Surface water sewers** – these pipes carry rainwater runoff from roofs, paved areas and roads. They may drain into the public sewer, into our sustainable drainage assets, into a watercourse or via our sustainable drainage assets to control flow rates into the public sewerage system.
- As we serve new development sites, our sewers will normally be separated. On rare occasions, we may own a **combined sewer** which carries both surface water and foul sewage away for treatment.
- **Sustainable drainage assets** – assets such as swales, rainwater attenuation tanks, ponds and other managed wetlands that store and treat surface water runoff for safe release into the environment or into the public sewer.
- If the effluent cannot be conveyed away through gravity alone, we may also own **pumping stations**.

You are responsible for the drain that runs from your property to the main sewer. We are always responsible for foul and surface water sewers outside of your property boundary. Sometimes, the public sewer is laid through gardens – segments of sewer that serve more than one property are our responsibility whereas the segment of lateral drain that only serves your property is your responsibility.

We do not own or have responsibility for road gullies, highway drains, land drainage, groundwater, watercourses or culverts. Where there are problems caused by drainage arrangements that multiple organisations are responsible for, including mua Water, we need to work together on improvements.

Sewer maps are available for inspection free of charge at our offices (mua Water Limited, Hiview House, Highgate Road, London NW5 1TN) or you can order them through our website. We will charge an administration fee if you order online.

### 4.2 Blockages and pollution from blockages

Blockages to our sewer network or your lateral drain can cause problems with performance, including backing up of sewage and potentially sewer flooding that pollutes the local environment or your property. It is important that any blockages are fixed quickly or avoided in the first place to avoid causing pollution or nuisance to your property or the surrounding area.

Blockages can arise for a number of reasons, including on older networks due to tree roots growing into the sewer or because an older sewer has collapsed. Blockages can also arise on newer networks because people put things into the sewers that they are not designed

to carry. Only wastewater and the three Ps (poo, pee and paper) should be put down the drain.

Fats oils and greases (FOG) can block sewers or drains, especially if they combine with unflushables such as wet wipes, nappies or sanitary towels. Unflushables can also release plastic into the environment in the form of tiny fibres or fragments that pass through wastewater treatment works causing pollution and potential harm to wildlife. You should dispose of anything that is not one of the three Ps in the bin. Alternatively, you can make fat balls for the birds in your garden with waste fats and oils.

You should not dispose of chemicals, oils or anything else in the public drains which may discharge surface water runoff directly to a watercourse or wetland habitat that could become polluted.

For more information about taking care of the sewers to avoid blockages and pollution, please go to our website.

You are responsible for clearing any blockages on the drain you are responsible for (i.e. the portion of drain within your property boundary that only serves your property). It's always worth checking with your insurer in case you are covered for the cost of the work.

We are responsible for clearing blockages on the sewers that we own and maintain. If the sewer runs through gardens, we may need to access your or your neighbour's land to clear a blockage. We may spot blockages when we attend site to operate and maintain our assets, and we also encourage people to tell us about any problems on our network so we can fix them as quickly as possible.

If you have a blocked sewer and are unsure who is responsible, you can call us on 01543 466 711, email us at [developerservices@muagroup.co.uk](mailto:developerservices@muagroup.co.uk) or contact us via our website, and we will investigate. If we are responsible, we will fix the problem.

### **4.3 Protection against flooding from public sewers**

We aim to provide sufficient capacity in our network to protect customers from sewer flooding. Where feasible we will own and maintain sustainable drainage assets, or SuDS, to help protect our operating areas and areas nearby. SuDS remove the rainwater and surface runoff from the public sewer or slow the flow of water into the public sewer substantially. SuDS therefore take the pressure off combined sewers, which need to be designed to handle rainfall. Our SuDS are designed with enough capacity to take rainfall from an exceptional event in current climatic/weather conditions and are future-proofed to take account of future climate change based on current forecasts.

As the population grows and as climate change results in increasing weather variability including more heavy downpours and other extreme weather events, the sewers regionally are increasingly put under pressure and, after extreme rainfall events, could overflow.

When sewers become blocked, they can also flood due to the blockage and will be exacerbated if there is significant surface runoff. The majority of local sewer flooding is due to a blockage. We describe in the section on blockages above the things we can all do



to avoid blocking the sewers, causing pollutants to get into the environment through flooding or causing pollution through putting the wrong things into the sewer.

If there is flooding from a sewer that affects your property land or your street, you should call our 24-hour operational hotline on 0800 011 4193. If the flooding is inside your property, we will attend as soon as possible, normally within four hours. We will try to help you as much as possible, provide information about how you can clean up, and our responsibilities with respect to sewer flooding.

We are not legally liable for loss or damage caused by flooding from public sewers unless we have been negligent. If you're affected by flooding and it has resulted in loss or damage to your property, your insurance company should be able to help you. If you are not insured, then please get in touch and we'll try to help. It remains your responsibility to have and maintain proper and adequate insurance.

If you have experienced flooding inside your property or on your land, you will be entitled to compensation from us. For internal flooding, we will make an automatic payment of a minimum of £150, up to a maximum of £1,000, with compensation relating to how much you pay for sewerage over a year. For flooding on your garden or land, this is a minimum of £75, up to a maximum of £500, also linked to your sewerage bill amount. You will need to provide us with evidence of the impact on your property to support your claim for compensation. This is also set out in section 5 (our guaranteed standards).

If you want to understand the cause of sewer flooding inside your property or within your property boundary, please email us at [developerservices@muagroup.co.uk](mailto:developerservices@muagroup.co.uk), write to us at the address at the start of this document or call us on 01543 466 711. We will respond within 10 working days of receiving your enquiry.

#### **4.4 New sewer connections**

You are entitled to connect with the main sewer at the time of writing as long as it meets certain requirements. It is your responsibility to make sure the connection is laid at an appropriate depth and location so that you can communicate with our sewers, does not cause environmental or amenity problems and to share your proposal for the connection with us in advance so that we can establish whether it is appropriate.

As we mainly operate on new build housing sites, we do not expect to receive new connection proposals in the normal course of business. Sewers are rarely laid by the water and sewerage company and tend to be self-laid by groundwork contractors or developers unless the water company's powers of access to land are needed to progress the work. If we are requested to do so, we will review all relevant requests, according to the approach set out in our new connections charging arrangements document.

For all new connections, you must pay an infrastructure charge which is a fixed contribution towards additional investment in our local sewerage system and the wider local area. The charge is in addition to the actual cost of making a connection.

Infrastructure charges are intended to make sure that the costs of the investment are met from a one-off charge to new properties as and when they are connected rather than from higher charges to existing properties. The maximum infrastructure charge for a domestic

supply is governed by Ofwat charging rules and the charges must broadly reflect the cost of local network expansion needed to support new connections over time.

All new connections are metered and will be our published measured wastewater tariffs.

We may also need to divert mains as a result of new properties being built or extensions to existing properties.

The legislation is set to change in 2024 so that new sites must receive approval, potentially combined with a planning application if the development has drainage implications. The approving body will consider whether the drainage system complies with national standards for sustainable drainage when making a decision. We expect that smaller or individual sewer connections will still be made if the development does not have drainage implications.

#### **4.5 Misconnections**

Sometimes foul sewers are connected in error to the surface water sewerage system. This is known as a misconnection. If the surface water sewer drains into a water course or to our sustainable drainage assets such as wetlands, the pollutants in the effluent can cause damage to wildlife, as well as public health risks from raw sewage getting into the environment.

We will not allow any new connections to our network where we have reviewed the design and it suggests you intend to connect to the wrong sewer.

Most problems are associated with the installation of washing machines or dishwashers, where outlet pipes are accidentally connected to a surface water drain instead of the foul drain. Chemicals and food waste can then contaminate the watercourse and affect water quality. Wrong connections can also occur from extensions when new toilets and sinks are incorrectly connected to the surface water drain.

If you are making any new connection to the foul or waste drains, please ensure that the connection is to a foul or combined drain/ sewer. Information on how to correctly install a washing machine or dishwasher will be included in the device's instruction leaflets, and your local council will be able to advise you about any building regulation requirements for building drainage.

We will investigate misconnections where we find a problem during our normal operational checks on our sewer network. If you suspect there is a problem with misconnections that affects our sustainable drainage assets or surface water drains, please contact us on 01543 466 711 and we will investigate.

## 5 Our guaranteed standards

This section summarises the standards of service we offer to our household customers, consumers who use our services and where relevant potential customers.

Performance area	Our service levels	What will we do if we fail to meet the standard?
<p><b>Appointments</b> We will arrange appointments with you in advance if we need to access your property or if you need us to attend.</p>	<p>Depending on your preference, we will specify a date and one of the following for the appointment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a two-hour time window, or</li> <li>• a morning/ afternoon time window and what we mean by morning/afternoon.</li> </ul> <p>You may cancel the appointment at any time. If we need to cancel, we will give you at least 24 hours' notice.</p>	<p>If we do not give you proper notice, we will automatically pay you <b>£20</b>.</p> <p>If we fail to attend within the agreed time window or fail to attend at all we will automatically pay you <b>£20</b>.</p>
<p><b>Complaints</b> If you are not satisfied with the service you have received from us you may complain to us in writing (via e-mail or letter).</p>	<p>We will provide a substantive response to written requests for changes to payment arrangements within five working days after we receive it.</p> <p>We will provide a substantive response to written complaints or queries within 10 working days after we receive it.</p>	<p>If we fail to respond within five working days, we will automatically pay you <b>£20</b>.</p> <p>If we fail to respond within 10 working days, we will automatically pay you <b>£20</b>.</p>

Performance area	Our service levels	What will we do if we fail to meet the standard?
<p><b>Planned supply interruptions</b></p> <p>We may need to turn off your supply to carry out work on our network.</p>	<p>If we plan to interrupt your supply, we will give you notice of the date and time we expect to turn the water off and the date and time when we will restore your supply.</p> <p>If we expect your supply will need to be off for more than four hours, we will give you at least 48 hours' notice in writing.</p> <p>If we do not restore the supply within the time stated on the notice, we will give you compensation, and you will also receive compensation for each subsequent 24-hour period that your supply remains off.</p>	<p>If we fail to notify you at least 48 hours before the interruption for an interruption over four hours we will automatically pay you <b>£20</b>.</p> <p>We will automatically pay you <b>£20</b> if we don't restore your supply when we said we would, and a <b>further £10 for each 24-hour period beyond</b> the time we should have restored your supply.</p>
<p><b>Unplanned supply interruptions</b></p> <p>You may experience a supply interruption if there is an operational event or emergency such as a burst main.</p>	<p>We will notify you as soon as possible that your supply has been cut off, when we plan to restore it, how to access alternative supplies, and a contact number you can call to get information about the interruption.</p> <p>If the burst is on a strategic main, we must restore supply within 48 hours of becoming aware of the problem, or within 12 hours for all other events.</p>	<p>If we fail to restore supply within 48 hours for strategic mains bursts or 12 hours for other interruptions, we will automatically pay you <b>£20</b>, and a <b>further £10 for each 24-hour period beyond</b> the time we should have restored your supply.</p>

Performance area	Our service levels	What will we do if we fail to meet the standard?
<b>Low pressure</b>	We must maintain at least a 7m static head in the communication pipe serving your property in normal operating conditions.	We will automatically pay you <b>£25</b> if the pressure in your communication pipe falls below 7m of static head for at least an hour and on two occasions within a 28-day period. You can claim this payment once per financial year (1 April to 31 March).
<b>Sewer flooding inside customer properties</b>	Wastewater must not enter your property from our sewers and drains, this includes backflow from toilets and drains.	For each sewer flooding event you experience we will automatically pay you either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a minimum of £150</li> <li>• a full refund of your sewerage charges for the year, or</li> <li>• capped at £1,000, if your bill is higher than that</li> </ul>
<b>External sewer flooding</b>	Wastewater must not enter your land or property from our sewers and drains, this includes backflow from toilets and drains.	For each sewer flooding event you experience that materially affects your land or property we will pay you either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a minimum of £75</li> <li>• a 50% refund of your sewerage charges for the year, or</li> <li>• capped at £500, if your bill is higher than that.</li> </ul> <p>If you have experienced external sewer flooding, you must claim for compensation providing evidence of the impact on your land or property.</p>

Performance area	Our service levels	What will we do if we fail to meet the standard?
<p><b>Timing of payments</b></p>	<p>If we breach any of the performance standards listed above, we must pay you within 10 working days of the performance payment becoming due.</p>	<p>If we can identify that you were affected and fail to pay automatically within 10 working days, we will pay you a further <b>£10</b>.</p> <p>If you have had to contact us to claim a payment that we should have made automatically, we will pay you a further <b>£10</b>, providing you contact us within three months of the service failure.</p>
<p><b>How we make compensation payments</b></p>	<p>You can ask us to make payments directly to you. We will also make payments directly for most of the standards listed above, except for complaints.</p> <p>If you have not asked for direct payments, we will credit any performance-related payments due for complaints handling performance directly to your account.</p>	
<p><b>Emergency water restrictions</b></p>	<p>If we have to interrupt or cut off your supply because of a drought we will pay compensation for each 24-hour period that your supply is cut off.</p> <p>We won't pay if, in Ofwat's opinion, the circumstances were so exceptional that interrupting or cutting off supplies couldn't be avoided.</p>	<p>We will automatically pay you <b>£10 per 24-hour period or pro rata</b> for each part of a day that the restrictions applied up to a <b>maximum of the average household water charges in the year</b> preceding the interruption.</p>

## 6 Priority services

We recognise that some of our customers and consumers using our water and wastewater services will need extra help. Different people will have different individual needs for their water and wastewater supply, either permanently or for certain periods of their lives.

We maintain a list of customers and their specific needs so that we can provide the services and support that you need when you need it. We call this our Priority Services Register (PSR).

The PSR helps us to deliver what you need either in your everyday interactions with our customer service and operational teams if something goes wrong on our network (such as a supply interruption) or if we need to restrict supply due to a drought.

Anyone who has particular needs for water and wastewater services can opt to be added to the register. If you have specific needs, you can either let us know, or we may ask you if you want to be included if you contact us for another reason and we find that you might benefit from priority services. We will also permit caregivers to register the people they care for onto the PSR. If you are a caregiver, we may check that the person you are registering is happy to be included on our PSR.

Examples of people whose circumstances might mean they could benefit from priority services include:

- People with mobility issues or who are frail and may need extra help with carrying bottled water if it is provided in large containers during an interruption
- If you have physical disabilities, are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or partially sighted
- If you have learning disabilities
- If you have a speech impairment
- If you have a medical condition that means you need to use more water or need continuous access to clean water
- If you have dementia
- If you have a mental health condition
- If you live alone, are nervous about bogus callers or are unable to answer the door
- If you are unable to be alone with a stranger
- If you cannot read, write or communicate in English
- If you are going through a serious life event such as a bereavement, redundancy or divorce
- If you are recovering from a serious illness or stay in hospital.

Once you are registered on our PSR it is important that we keep up to date with what you need. Please let us know if your circumstances or needs change and we will update our records. We may also contact you from time to time to find out if anything has changed.

Any information you give us about the PSR is confidential and we will only use it to provide priority water and wastewater services to you. If we operate gas and/or electricity networks in your area and think that you might be eligible to be included on our energy PSRs, we will ask you whether you would find this useful before we do anything more.

If you would like to be included in our PSR, you can contact us in confidence using the following methods:

- Call us on 0333 000 0001
- Email us at [developerservices@muagroup.co.uk](mailto:developerservices@muagroup.co.uk)
- Write to us at mua Water Limited, Payment Processing Department, Rocfort Road, Snodland, Kent ME6 5AH.

For more information about the priority services we can offer please visit our website.

## 7 Customer debt code of practice

This code of practice explains the help we can offer if you are struggling to pay your bill and what you need to do if you cannot pay on time. It also sets out the steps we will take to recover debt from our household customers.

Copies of this code are available on our website or you can contact us on the details below to receive a paper copy.

### 7.1 Water and wastewater charges

We charge our customers for water and wastewater services based on annual charges schemes that we publish on our website. Our charges are regulated so that you will not pay any more for your water than you would if you were being supplied by your local water and sewerage provider(s). We have different charges depending on the area where you live, mirroring the charges you would pay with the local suppliers.

Your charges will normally be calculated on a metered basis, where you pay for the actual volume of water used plus standing charges reflecting our fixed administrative costs.

If charging based on your meter is not possible, we may calculate an assessed charge based on the type of property you live in.

The occupier is liable for charges applied to every connected water and sewage service point where we provide a service. If more than one person shares a property, everyone is responsible, even if the bill is only in the name of one occupier. All occupiers are jointly and severally liable, meaning that we can recover our charges from any one or all occupiers.

If you are a private tenant, consider you to be liable for charges. However, if you think your landlord is liable under the tenancy agreement you need to ask your landlord to contact us to arrange payment. If your landlord fails to pay the charges, you remain liable for the charges and must pay the bill.

### 7.2 Your bill

We normally bill every 6 months and aim to read the meter at least annually. You should check your bill when you receive it. Your bill is due for payment within 10 working days of receipt.

If you receive an estimated bill and you are able to do so safely, you can provide us with a meter read and we will update your bill. Meters are normally situated on the pavement



just outside your property boundary. If you are having difficulty locating your water meter you can call us on 01543 466 711 and we will help you find it.

If your bill is abnormally high, it may be due to a leak on your supply pipe (the part of the pipe between the meter and your property) or inside your property. You are responsible for leaks in your house or on your supply pipe and should get any leak fixed promptly. You may be eligible for a leakage allowance and should contact us if you want to claim an allowance. Further information about our leak allowance policy can be found in our leakage code of practice.

### 7.3 Payment arrangements

You can arrange to pay your bill in the following ways:

- Monthly direct debit is the easiest way to pay your water bills and allows you to budget by spreading your payments across the year. Please contact us on 0333 000 0001 to arrange direct debit payments.
- Payment in full on receipt of the six-monthly bill by credit or debit card by telephone on 0333 000 0001.
- Payment in full on receipt of the six-monthly bill by posting a cheque to us.
- In instalments – we would normally agree to monthly, fortnightly or weekly instalments but will consider tailored payment arrangements if you are struggling to pay your bill.
- Payment in full on receipt of the six-monthly bill by bank transfer

Our bank details for a bank transfer are as follows:

Sort code: TBC  
Account number: TBC

To pay your bill by post, please send your cheque made payable to mua Water Ltd, with your account number written on the back to mua Water Limited, Payment Processing Department, Rocfort Road, Snodland, Kent ME6 5AH.

### 7.4 Billing queries

If you suspect your bill is incorrect or you do not think you are liable for it you should contact us immediately on 0333 000 0001 or [developerservices@muagroup.co.uk](mailto:developerservices@muagroup.co.uk), and we will try to resolve the matter. If an account query cannot be resolved immediately, we will temporarily stop any debt recovery activities until we have resolved the query.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of a billing query, we will follow our complaints procedure. If we have fully investigated your complaint and it is not resolved to your satisfaction you may refer the complaint to CCW, and if CCW has exhausted your complaint to WATRS. CCW can also offer advice about debt if you need it. Their contact details are provided below:

#### CCW

Telephone: 0300 034 2222  
Email: [enquiries@ccwater.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ccwater.org.uk)  
Website: [ccwater.org.uk](http://ccwater.org.uk)

Address: 23 Stephenson Street, Birmingham B2 4BH

### **WATRS**

Telephone: 020 7520 3801

Email: [info@watrs.org](mailto:info@watrs.org)

Website: [watrs.org](http://watrs.org)

Address: WATRS International, Dispute Resolution Centre, 70 Fleet Street, London EC4Y 1EU

## **7.5 Help paying your bill**

We understand that managing your household bills can sometimes be difficult – and we're here to help. If you are having difficulty paying your bills, please contact us as soon as possible so that we can explore options to help you avoid getting into further arrears. Wherever possible, we will seek to offer flexible payment options that suit your individual needs, and we will be sensitive to your needs if you are facing hardship, for example, more regular payments to help you manage your weekly budget.

If you receive income support, job seekers allowance, pension credits, universal credits or Employment and Support Allowances (ESA) from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), you may be able to arrange to make payments directly from your benefits under the WaterDirect scheme. This only applies if you are in arrears with your water bill. Please contact DWP for more details and make sure you let us know.

If you are granted an Order for Bankruptcy which encompasses a water and sewerage charge debt, the debt will be limited to the charges that are outstanding as at the date of the Order for Bankruptcy, including any charges accrued on a daily basis. Any charges that accrue from the day after the Order for Bankruptcy shall be due as if the property had been newly occupied on that day.

As well as mua Water, there are a number of organisations you can contact to help you with household debt, which we know can involve complex issues with arrears across all your household bills and potentially complex personal circumstances.

**Citizens Advice** ([citizensadvice.org.uk](http://citizensadvice.org.uk)) is an independent charity that offers free, confidential advice on a wide range of problems, including household debt but also illness, redundancy and other issues that may be exacerbating hardship.

**Step Change** ([stepchange.org](http://stepchange.org) or call 0800 138 1111) offers free tailored solutions and practical help to manage debt.

**National Debt Line** is a free helpline to help people manage debt problems. You can contact them on 0808 808 4000 or visit [nationaldebtline.co.uk](http://nationaldebtline.co.uk).

## **7.6 Social tariff: WaterSure**

We offer the WaterSure tariff, which provides financial assistance to household customers who may be in hardship and who need to use large amounts of water for essential purposes. Your bill will be capped at the regional average. You must meet the criteria in two areas to qualify for the tariff.

**mua Water Limited**, Hiview House, Highgate Road, London NW5 1TN

**T** +44 (0)20 7267 4366 **F** +44 (0)20 7482 3107 **E** [developerservices@muagroup.co.uk](mailto:developerservices@muagroup.co.uk)  
Company No. 14802465

Firstly, if you or any member of your household receives any of the following benefits/ tax credits:

- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (except families in receipt of the family element only)
- Working Tax Credit
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Universal Credit

Secondly, you need to either:

- Be responsible, and receive child benefit, for three or more children under the age of 19 living in the property, **or**
- Have (or someone living in the property must have) a medical condition that requires significant additional use of water. Examples of medical conditions include:
  - Desquamation (flaky skin disease)
  - Weeping skin disease (eczema, psoriasis, varicose ulceration)
  - Incontinence
  - Abdominal stoma
  - Crohn's disease
  - Ulcerative colitis
  - Renal failure requiring home dialysis (except where the health authority contributes to the cost of the water used in dialysis)
  - Any other medical condition that uses significant volumes of water and can be supported by a doctor's certificate.

If you think you may qualify for this tariff, you can call us on 0333 000 0001 or download the form from our website. If you need help with the form or the evidence needed just let us know.

### **7.7 Paying directly from your benefits**

If you receive income support, job seekers allowance, pension credits, universal credits or Employment and Support Allowances (ESA) from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), you may be able to arrange to make payments directly from your benefits under WaterDirect. This only applies if you are in arrears with your water bill. Please contact DWP for more details.

### **7.8 If you fall into arrears**

If you fall into arrears or are at risk of doing so, you should contact us as soon as possible. We will try to help you get back on track by offering alternative payment arrangements and can help you access advice on how to manage your outgoings. We will also assess your eligibility for the WaterSure tariff and Water Direct arrangements, and whether these could help you manage your bills better.

Contacting us to talk about your bill is the best course of action so that we can help you. If you fall into arrears, we will try to contact you to see how we can help. If you fail to

contact us or to respond to our attempts to contact you, we will commence debt recovery action.

We may access your credit records during our debt recovery process so that we can better understand how to manage your account. We will only use the data received for debt collection purposes.

We will take the following action if you are in arrears, have not arranged a payment plan with us and have failed to respond to our attempts to contact you:

- We will send you a final notice, giving you 10 days to pay the outstanding amount.
- If you do not pay or contact us to agree a payment arrangement, we will send you a notification of intention to file a default, which is a record of non-payment on your customer credit file. The notice will explain that if you fail to pay the amount owing to us within 28 days of receipt, we will be entitled to register a default against your customer credit file with credit reference agencies. This will make it more difficult for you to obtain credit in the future and the default of the payment could stay on your credit file for six years.
- If you still do not pay us after 28 days, we will notify you of our intention to commence a litigation-based debt recovery strategy and may involve a debt collection agency depending on the circumstances.
- If you still fail to contact us, we will issue a county court claim against you for the debt, will include our legal costs to the total amount outstanding and may seek to recover interest on the debt.
- If you still do not pay the outstanding debt, we will seek a county court judgment against you, meaning further legal costs may be added to what you owe, depending on the outcome. Your credit rating and therefore ability to obtain credit in the future may also be affected.
- If you still fail to keep up with the arrears, we may seek through the courts to make deductions from your income or to recover the debt if you sell your property.

If you have entered into a payment plan with us, you will need to keep up the payments. If you fail to do so, you will have to pay the full amount that you owe us.

If you have defaulted on a payment plan, we will take the following steps:

- We will send a warning letter giving you seven days to pay the unpaid instalment(s).
- If you fail to pay the outstanding payments, we will cancel your payment plan and the total arrears will be payable in full with immediate effect.
- If you do not pay or contact us to agree a payment arrangement, we will send you a notification of intention to file a default if you do not pay within 28 days, which is a record of non-payment on your customer credit file.
- If you still fail to contact us, we will issue a county court claim against you for the debt, will include our legal costs to the total amount outstanding and may seek to recover interest on the debt.
- If you still do not pay the outstanding debt, we will seek a county court judgment against you, meaning further legal costs may be added to what you owe, depending on the outcome. Your credit rating and therefore ability to obtain credit in the future may also be affected.

**mua Water Limited**, Hiview House, Highgate Road, London NW5 1TN

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Company No. 14802465

- If you still fail to keep up with the arrears, we may seek through the courts to make deductions from your income or to recover the debt if you sell your property.

If you fall into arrears and we incur costs in securing payment from you, we reserve the right to recover those costs and interest on the outstanding debt. These include any collection charges, court fees, solicitor costs and enforcement costs reasonably incurred by us in pursuing the debt. If we consider that you are in particular hardship, we may also waive our right to charge interest or our debt recovery costs depending on your individual circumstances.

## 7.9 Moving house

If you are moving into a property served by mua Water, please contact us with an opening meter read. If you are moving out of the property, please make sure to give us at least two working days' notice, and preferably more if possible so we can make arrangements for your account.

If you do not give us two working days' notice, you will be liable for charges until whichever of the following occurs first:

- The new occupier contacts us and informs us that they are now responsible for the charges
- The twenty-eighth day after we are informed
- The date on which the meter would normally have been read in order to calculate the final bill.

Once we have the correct data, mua Water will provide a final bill. If there is a credit on the account, we will provide a refund. If we do not receive a final meter read from you, we will use an estimated meter reading to calculate your final bill.

If a customer moves out of a property without notifying us and a new customer moves in without notifying us, we will take a meter reading to calculate the average daily usage and use this to estimate the amount owed by the new customer since the date they moved in.

We will back bill as required within our legal rights to do so if there is a delay in identifying a new customer.

If you have moved out of a property leaving unpaid arrears and no forwarding address, we may pass the debt to a debt collection agency who will try to recover the debt on our behalf. We reserve the right to recover the debt collection agency's costs and interest on the outstanding debt.

## 7.10 Complaints

If you are not happy with our debt recovery processes, you can complain to us. Our customer code of practice sets out our complaints procedure, and can be found on our website.

If we enter into County Court proceedings, bailiffs may become involved. Bailiffs are employed by the County Court, and if you have a complaint about them you should contact your local County Court with your complaint.

## 8 Leakage

This code of practice explains how we will deal with a suspected leak on your supply pipe (the pipe running from the meter to your property). It is important that we know about all leaks on our network and on your supply pipe so that we can protect the environment and stop water being wasted.

### 8.1 Responsibility for pipes

#### Our pipes

The water mains and pipes in the roads and footpaths (the highway) are normally ours. All our customers have water meters installed, and there will be a stop tap by the meter. The stop tap and meter are ours, and we are responsible for keeping them in good order.

Water mains maps are available for inspection free of charge at our offices (mua Water Limited, Hiview House, Highgate Road, London NW5 1TN) or you can order them through our website. We will charge an administration fee if you order online.

#### Your pipes

The pipe taking water from our meter into your house is called the supply pipe and is normally yours. It is your responsibility (or your landlord's), in the same way you maintain your internal plumbing in your house, to maintain your pipe in good order even if it runs under other properties before reaching your house.

### 8.2 Responsibility for leaks

We are responsible for fixing all leaks on our pipes, the meter and outside of the stop tap promptly.

If there is a leak on your supply pipe, it is your responsibility to repair it. Leaks can worsen over time and may cause damage to your property if left unaddressed.

### 8.3 Causes of leaks and how to spot them

Water leaks can occur inside or outside of properties due to a number of causes including:

- Faulty pipework or fittings. A common cause can be faulty fittings, such as the ball valves in water tanks and cisterns. While this type of leakage is usually visible through water running from overflow pipes, the water can often run to waste through toilets and drains.
- Frozen water pipes can become blocked and sometimes burst as they thaw. We recommend that you lag or insulate water tanks and pipes, and keep your heating running at the minimum setting even when you are away to prevent water leaks inside your property and the damage caused by them.
- The weather causes soil movements that damage underground pipes (e.g. when the soil freezes, thaws or dries out)
- Damage to underground pipes over time from the soil or water outside the pipe causing them to corrode
- Gaps forming between sections where pipes join
- Damage to underground pipes from traffic vibrations or construction activity

You may have a leak if you notice any of the following:

- Your meter read is increasing at a higher-than-normal rate
- There may be damp patches around your property
- There may be areas of your garden where the grass looks greener or continues to grow during dry spells
- You experience a reduction or loss of water pressure
- You can hear running water or noise from the pipes in your property when you are not using any water.

If you suspect that you have a leak, you should turn off any device that uses water in your property and make sure no cisterns or tanks are filling. You should also locate your internal stop tap (usually under the kitchen sink) and turn it off. Once you are satisfied no water is being used in your property you should read your meter, which is normally situated in the pavement at the property boundary. Wait for at least 30 minutes (or ideally an hour) then read your meter again. If the meter reading is different or you can see the dial on the meter turning when you read it, you may have a leak.

If you suspect that you have a leak on your supply pipe and report it to us, we can help you to investigate.

#### **8.4 How to report a leak**

If you spot a water leak anywhere on our network, please tell us about it so that we can get it fixed. You can contact us on our 24-hour helpline number 01543 466 711 or you can report leaks on our website.

We may also spot leaks when we are maintaining our network either on our own assets or on yours. If we spot a leak on your supply pipe, we will let you know immediately. We can offer free advice about fixing supply pipe leaks – please contact us on 01543 466 711 or through our website.

#### **8.5 Fixing leaks**

We will fix leaks on our network promptly when you report them to us or we find them during our operational checks.

If the leak is on your supply pipe, you are responsible for fixing it. It is important that you do this promptly to avoid damage to your and your neighbours' property.

We would recommend contacting an approved plumber, for example under the Water Industry Approved Plumber Scheme – see [wras.co.uk/wiaps](http://wras.co.uk/wiaps) for more information. If you contact us, we can also offer advice on how to fix a leak.

If the leak is within your property, you may find that you are covered by your household insurance policy, so it's always worth checking with your insurer. We recommend that you contact your own plumber to carry out repairs.

If we identify a leak at your property, we will tell you in writing by sending you a Waste of Water Notice. If you fail to fix the leak in a reasonable amount of time and we consider that you are intentionally wasting water, which is an offence under water law, we will

consider whether to take further action. We also have powers to fix the leak ourselves and recharge our costs if necessary.

If the leak is posing a contamination threat to drinking water or risks our assets being damaged, we may serve a legal notice on you and in the event of a serious threat we may need to disconnect your supply until the leak is repaired.

## 8.6 Leak allowances

If you have a meter, it will register any wasted water from the leak and you would be charged for the wasted water. In some circumstances, we can offer a one-off leakage allowance on your water bill. You are eligible for an allowance if:

- You are a household customer
- You repair the leak promptly, fully addressing its cause. We will reduce the allowance as set out below depending on how long it takes you to complete the repair after we notify you
- You make a claim within three months of the repair being completed
- The leak was not caused by neglect, negligence or deliberate damage
- We have not served a legal notice on you to prevent damage to our network, waste or contamination
- You provide evidence that the repair has been completed in the form of an invoice from your plumber or allow us to inspect the repair.

If you have a water meter, we will compare how much you have used when you had the leak against a comparable period in the past. We will credit your water and wastewater services account with the allowance amount (reflecting the difference in cost before and during the leak).

If we do not have sufficient information about your past usage, we will estimate the allowance based on typical usage for a similar property size and occupancy to yours. We may adjust the amount subsequently if your ongoing usage after the leak is repaired turns out to be lower than we estimated.

Where adjustments are made to water supply charges, a similar adjustment may also be made for the wastewater charges. We will make this adjustment if we are your wastewater supplier. If you only receive a water supply from us, we will advise your sewerage provider and they may make an adjustment.

Allowances may be backdated as follows:

- Supply pipe leaks for the duration of the leak up to and including the date of repair to a maximum of two years.
- Internal leaks – any usage on your last bill attributable to the leak up to a maximum of six months.

As stated above, we may reduce the leak allowance as follows depending on how quickly you fix the leak:

- If you fix the leak within 30 days, you will qualify for the full allowance
- If you fix the leak within 30-60 days, we will reduce the allowance by 33%



- If you fix the leak within 60-90 days, we will reduce the allowance by 66%
- If it takes you more than 90 days to fix the leak you will not be eligible.

If you are a tenant, you may need to contact your landlord to arrange the repair. If you believe this has caused the repair to be delayed let us know and we will take your circumstances into account.

You can apply for a leak allowance using the contact details provided at the start of this document. If you are worried that you may have a supply pipe leak, you can also contact us and we will help you investigate.

## 9 Our complaints procedure

We want to deliver great service to our customers that you deserve and expect. If we get it wrong, we want to put things right as quickly as possible. If we haven't provided the high quality of service you expect, please contact us so we can work with you to resolve the problem.

### 9.1 Making a complaint

#### Contacting us

There are several ways to contact us:

- By phone on **0333 000 0001**
- By email at [developerservices@muagroup.co.uk](mailto:developerservices@muagroup.co.uk)
- Through our website at [muagroup.co.uk/contact](http://muagroup.co.uk/contact)
- By post at **mua Water Limited, Payment Processing Department, Rocfort Road, Snodland, Kent ME6 5AH.**

If you use our website, please make sure to provide full contact details so that we can respond to you as quickly and effectively as possible.

Please note that we have a separate line for operational emergencies that you can use if you need us to attend to an urgent matter regarding your water or wastewater supply. The number is 01543 466 711.

#### When we receive your complaint

Once we receive your complaint, we will get back to you as soon as possible. Some complaints can be resolved fairly quickly, where it is clear what the problem is and what we can do about it.

Other complaints may be more complex and we may need to send our operations team to visit your home or our local network to investigate. In exceptional circumstances, we may also need to trial more than one potential solution before we can put things right. We know that complaints can be a source of frustration and inconvenience for our customers, especially if they are complex – we will treat you with respect and do our best to help you.

Whether you put your complaint in writing, or if you call us to complain we will send you a substantive response within 10 working days. If you call us, we may decide to summarise your complaint in writing along with any further details we have received from you and our response to help us clarify your complaint.

Should we fail to provide a substantive response within 10 working days we will automatically credit your account with a compensation payment, as set out in Section 5 (our guaranteed standards).

If our initial substantive response is not acceptable to you, let us know. We will continue to review whether other options are open to us to resolve your case until we are satisfied that we have exhausted all available options.

### **If you are not happy with our response**

If we have exhausted all the options we think are available for resolving your complaint and you still feel that we could have done more, you can refer the matter to the Consumer Council for Water (CCW).

CCW will accept your case only when our complaints procedure has been completed. If you refer a complaint to CCW and they think we have not exhausted the complaints procedure, they may send the complaint back to us so we can continue to investigate.

CCW will review your case and may investigate further if they need more information. When CCW completes its review may either ask us to take further action or may uphold our original findings.

You can contact CCW on the following details:

Telephone: 0300 034 2222 (England)  
Email: [enquiries@ccwater.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ccwater.org.uk)  
Website: [ccwater.org.uk](http://ccwater.org.uk)  
Address: CCW, 23 Stephenson Street, Birmingham B2 4BH.

If your complaint remains unresolved after CCW has fully reviewed it, you may be eligible to refer your complaint to the Water Industry Redress Scheme (WATRS), which can provide an independent binding decision. WATRS' contact details are as follows:

### **Referring complaints to the water industry redress scheme (WATRS)**

WATRS is a free and independent adjudication service which reviews disputes between customers and companies that CCW has not been able to resolve. You will need to have received a 'deadlock' letter from CCW to be eligible.

You can apply to WATRS on the following details:

Telephone: 020 7520 3801  
Email: [info@watrs.org](mailto:info@watrs.org)  
Website: [watrs.org](http://watrs.org)  
Address: WATRS International, Dispute Resolution Centre, 70 Fleet Street, London EC4Y 1EU

If WATRS finds that your case is eligible and accepts it for adjudication, it will review your complaint and come to a binding decision.