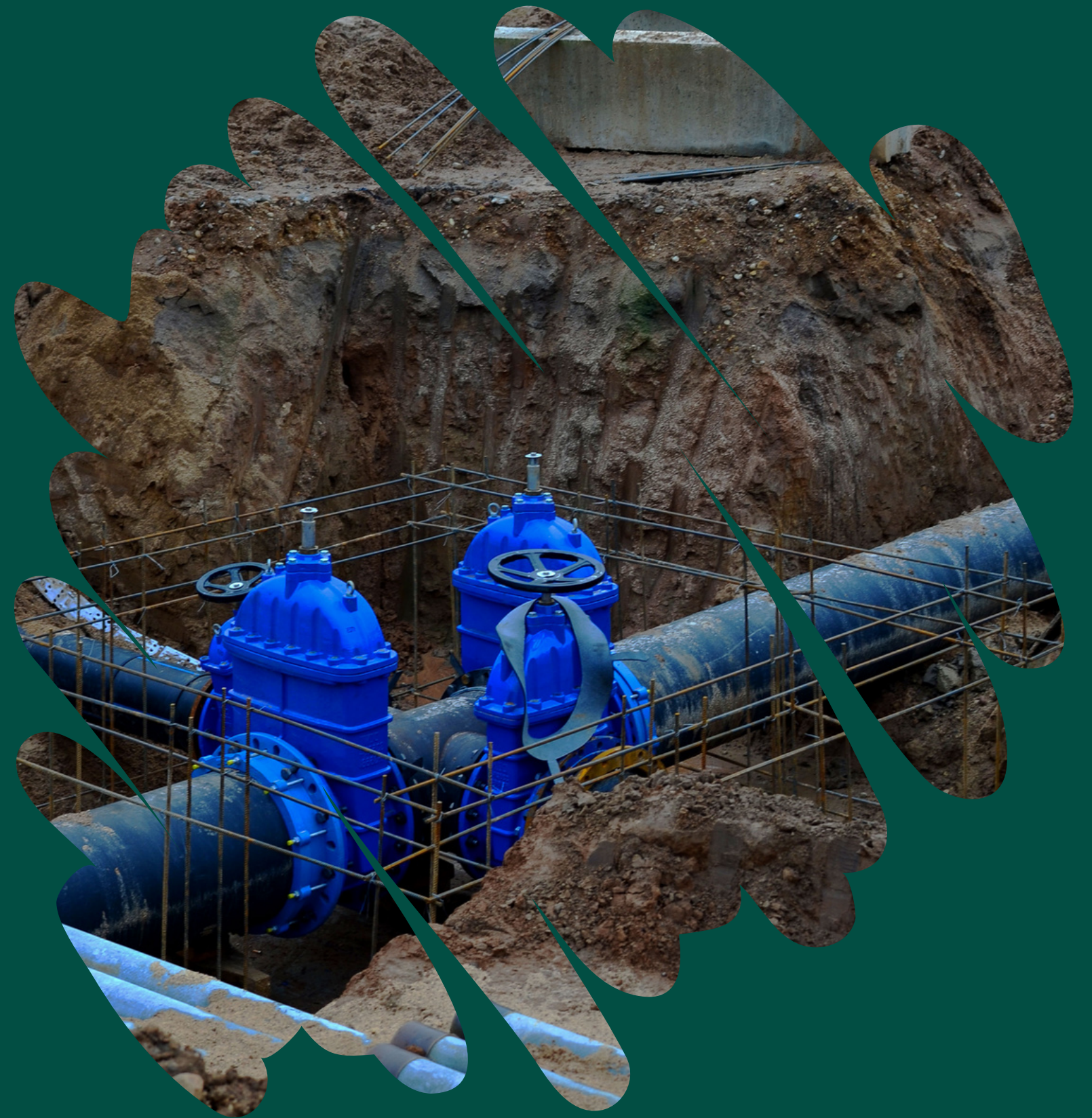


United Utilities

THIRD PARTY BRIEFING

Managing water quality in the network

Nicola Miller BSc(Hons), PGDip, MRSPH
Water Fittings Manager



Why is water quality important?



Our regulatory obligations as a water undertaker:

- United Utilities has a statutory duty to supply ‘**wholesome**’ water.
- Water supplies provided for **human consumption** (which includes cooking, drinking, food preparation and washing) and to premises where it is used for food production must meet the wholesomeness requirements.
- The wholesomeness requirements are defined in the Regulations*, which say what is and isn’t allowed to be in the drinking water supply, to ensure all our customers are safe.
- A water undertakers compliance with these regulations is regularly reviewed by one of our regulators the Drinking Water Inspectorate.
- Each year, almost all the checks carried out by water companies, on the quality of the water they supply, pass the many tests that are required.
- On average, over 99.95% of all tests pass the standards and small variations are due to local factors which can affect individual samples of drinking water.

*[The Water Supply \(Water Quality\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2018](#)

Water quality and our customers

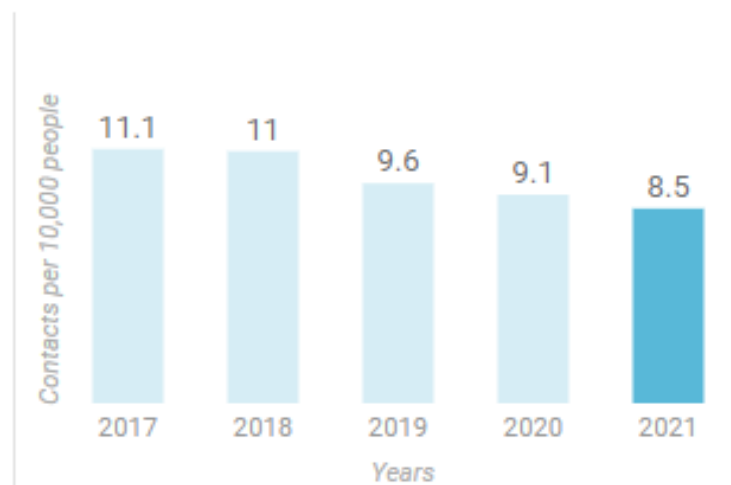
- One of the biggest reason for our customers to contact us is associated with the way their water looks when they turn the tap on.
- In the vast majority of cases, the water that comes out of taps is clear.
- There are various reasons why water can be unclear:
 - Plumbing issues in homes such as corrosion of pipes can cause problems
 - Planned or unplanned work on water pipes, for example to fix a burst or leak
 - Third party usage
- Several activities can disturb sediment in the pipes, which usually only for a short time can make the water brown, or create tiny air bubbles, which makes the water look milky.

Your water should be clear

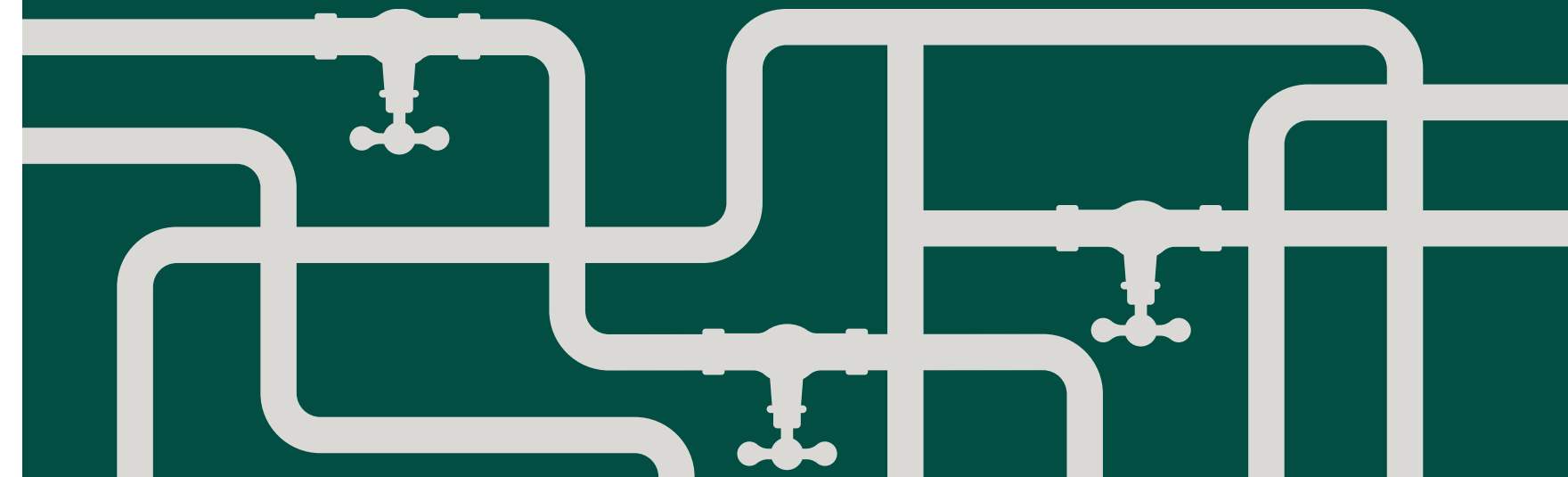
Very occasionally for a brief period it may appear discoloured or contain particles.

8.5

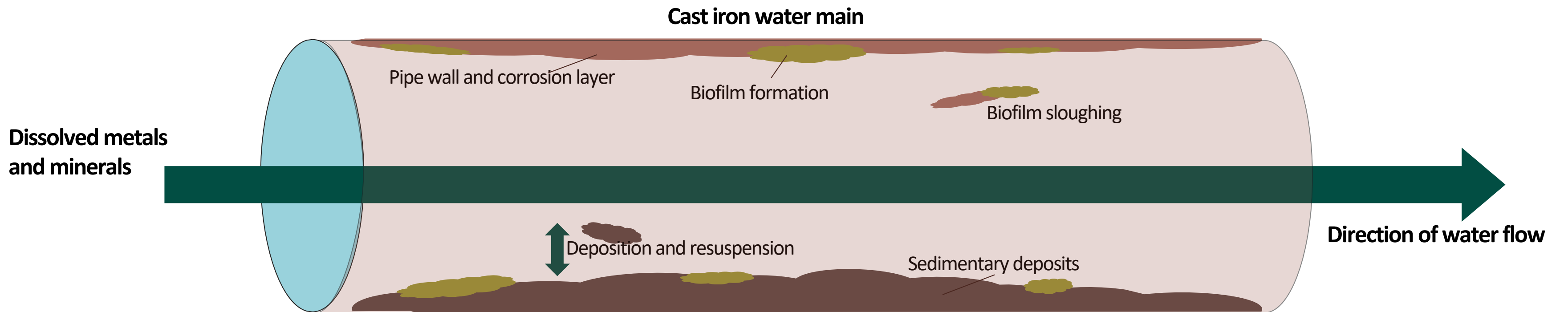
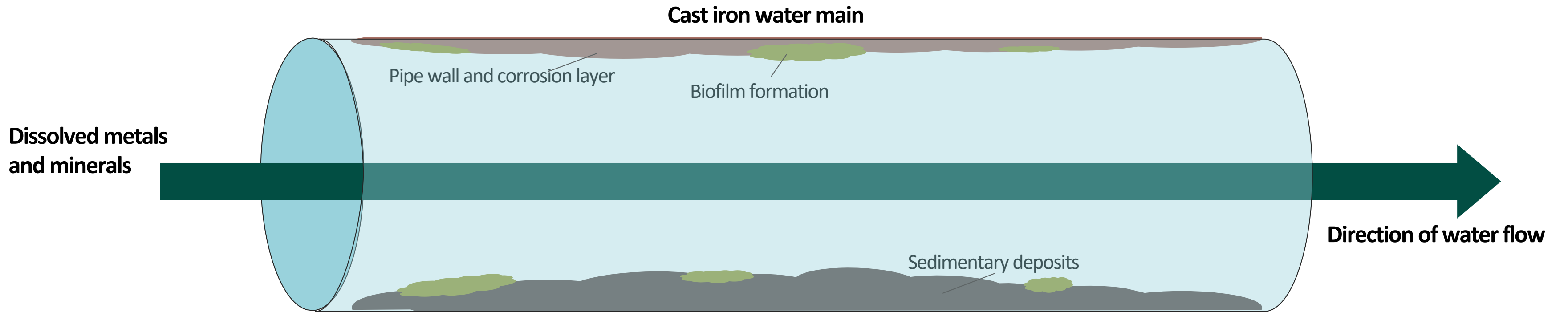
Contacts per 10,000 people



Number of times water companies were contacted by their customers because their water wasn't clear
Source: Drinking Water Inspectorate; England and Wales, Jan 2021 – Dec 2021



What is discoloured water?



What are we doing about discoloured water?

Around 1/3 of reports received by United Utilities customer call centre, reporting discoloured water are associated with third party users connecting to our distribution network.

Whilst some users are licenced to do so, some users are taking water illegally, which puts our water network at risk of contamination.

The Water Fittings Regulations (or Byelaws in Scotland) are national requirements for the design, installation and maintenance of plumbing systems, water fittings and water-using appliances.

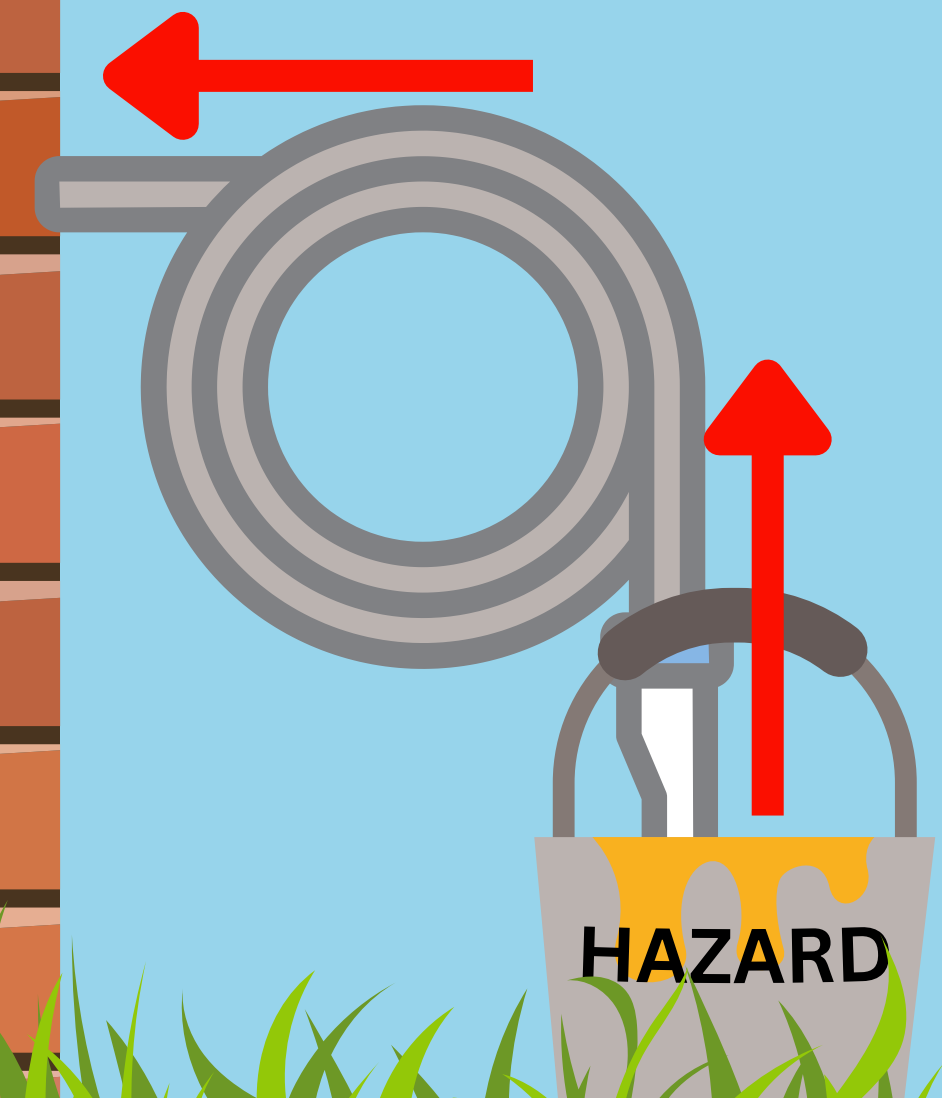
What are the Water Regulations for?



What is backflow?

Backflow is where the water flows back towards the supply source, either by siphonic action (backsiphonage) or forced back under pressure (backpressure). This could be from taps, hoses or other water carrying equipment.

Where water comes into contact with materials, chemicals or other fluids, these too could be 'pulled back' with the water and potentially contaminate your drinking water system.



Contamination and fluid categories

Whatever the potential source of contamination, the water we supply to our customers must be protected.

For this reason the Regulations require adequate protection to be built in and/or installed to prevent backflow from occurring. The Regulations place potential contaminants and substances into one of five fluid categories dependent on the harm it may cause.

It also specifies the types of devices for preventing backflow that may be used and the fluid categories they are able to protect against.



Fluid category 1

Wholesome water supplied by a water supplier and complying with the requirements of the regulations.



Fluid category 2

Water with an aesthetic quality that is impaired due to a change in its temperature or the presence of substances or organisms causing a change in its taste, odour or appearance.



Fluid category 3

Fluid that is a slight health hazard because of the concentration of substances of low toxicity.



Fluid category 4

Fluid that is a significant health hazard because of the concentration of toxic substances.



Fluid category 5

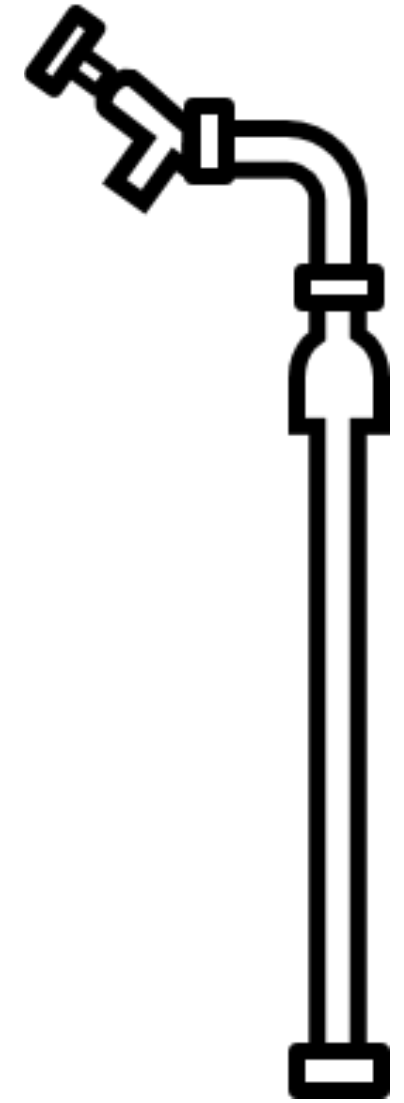
Fluid that is a serious health hazard because of the concentration of pathogenic organisms, radioactive or very toxic substances.

Suspected hydrant misuse

We understand that some of our business customers may sometimes require an additional water supply outside of our normal supply arrangements.

It's important that only standpipes authorised by United Utilities are to be connected to our network. They are fitted with a meter, so that we can measure how much water has been used. They also have a double check valve installed so that we can make sure nothing nasty, that shouldn't be there, get back into the drinking water, keeping it safe for all of our customers to use.

Some hydrants for the Fire Brigade, and these are marked with yellow markings, or a yellow and black plate, these are for fire fighting purposes only. The best hydrants are on larger diameter mains and we call these our 'designated hydrants'.

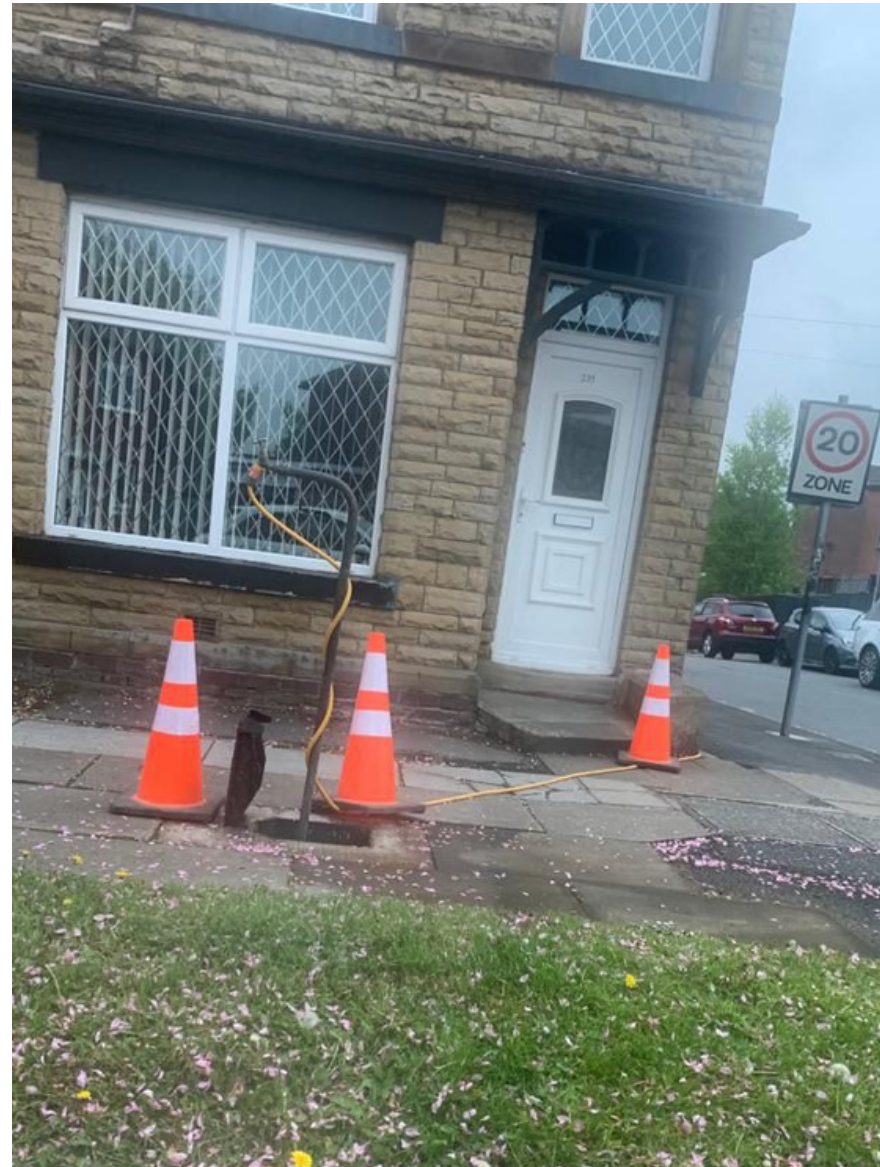


Scan the QR code to find out where your nearest designated hydrant is, denoted by the target symbol on the map

SCAN ME



Suspected hydrant misuse



See it



Snap it

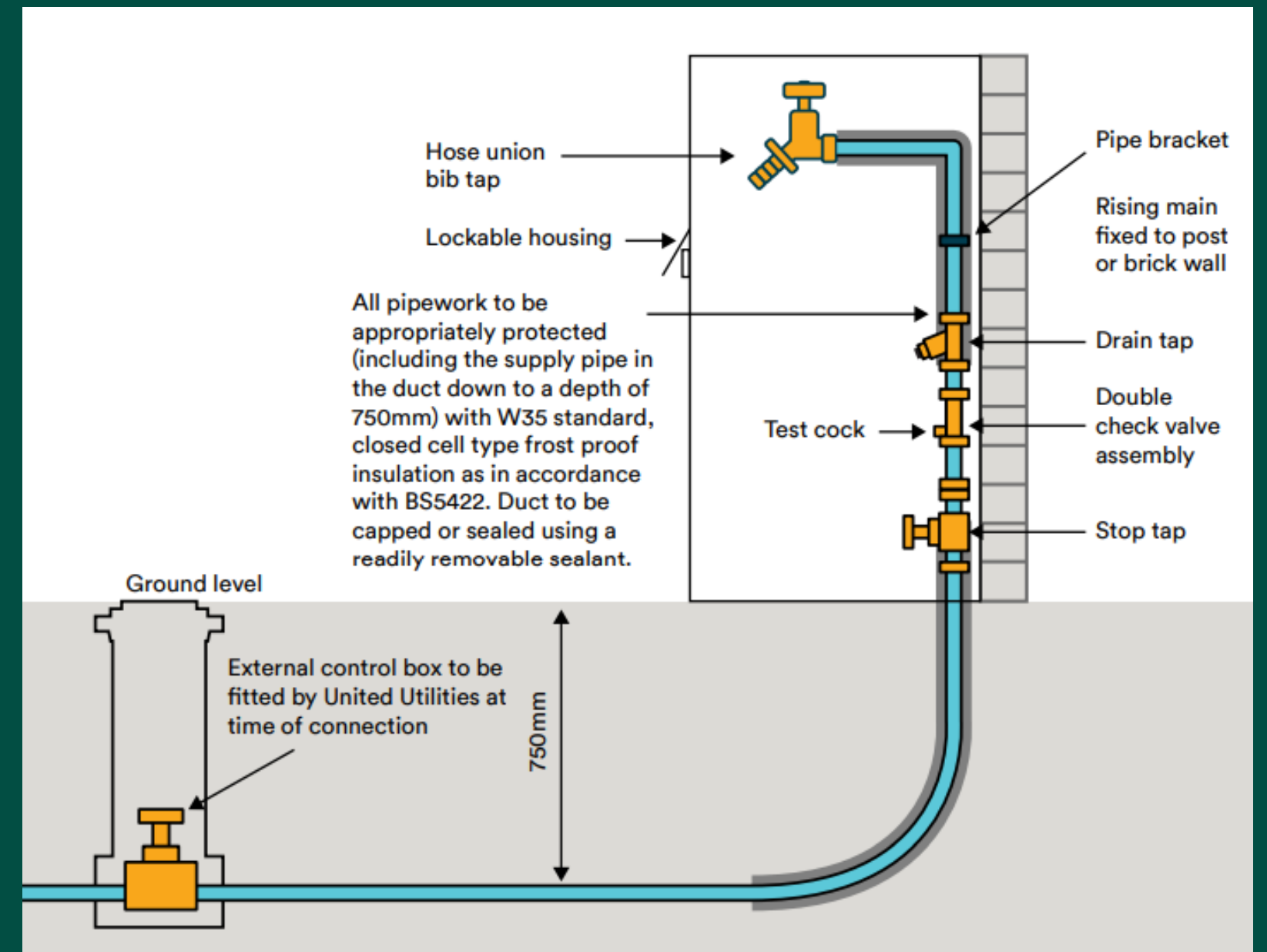


Report it

If you see something which you believe to be suspected hydrant misuse then let us know [here](#).

Temporary supply

- If you need a water supply while developing a site, you could apply for a temporary supply. This would be valid for 12 months.
- You're responsible for laying the new service pipe to the boundary of the site.
- You'll need to install a tap at the end of the service pipe and ensure it is within a lockable box.
- A temporary connection can either be disconnected when the work is complete or it can be used for a domestic water supply once the property is constructed.



Approved contractors

- Under the water fittings regulations, approved contractor schemes are voluntary organisations for plumbers and plumbing contractors set up in accordance with Regulation 1(2).
- Approved contractors are either approved by a water undertaker or an organisation appointed by a regulator.
- There are currently six approved contractor schemes, some operate nationally and others in defined areas.
- An approved contractor is a qualified plumber belonging to an approved contractor scheme. They can certify all types of plumbing work in any premises as being compliant with the water fittings regulations/byelaws.
- A sector scheme member is not recognised as being a plumber but rather someone who does limited specific plumbing work. Sector scheme members can only certify the plumbing within the scope of that sector scheme i.e. some but not all types of plumbing work.



Approved contractors

- Under the water fittings regulations, approved contractor schemes are voluntary organisations for plumbers and plumbing contractors set up in accordance with Regulation 1(2).

Do we want a slide on
correct pipe installation?

Questions

