

WATER AND WASTEWATER SERVICES

Our complaints procedure



Our complaints procedure

We provide water and wastewater services to over 3.3 million household and business customers across the North West. We aim to provide the highest level of service at all times.

However, there may be times when things go wrong and you need to complain to us. When you do make a complaint, we aim to deal with your concerns efficiently and fairly, and to put things right as quickly as possible. We will also use your comments to improve our services to you in the future.

This booklet tells you how to make a complaint and how we will deal with your complaint.

We value the opportunity to speak with you on the phone in order to resolve any outstanding issue/concern that you may have.





Who can make a complaint?

You can complain to us if you are dissatisfied with any aspect of your water or wastewater service.

You don't necessarily have to be one of our customers to make a complaint. You can be anyone who is getting, or trying to get, a service from us, or anyone acting on behalf of a customer (such as a relative, friend, carer or advice agency).

How to complain

To get the fastest solution to your complaint **please phone us** and we will try to resolve your problem there and then. If we are unable to resolve your complaint immediately we will take the necessary action and keep you updated until it is resolved.

Alternatively, if you prefer you can contact us by letter or by using our web site or in person.

Our contact telephone numbers and addresses are provided at the back of this book.

Whichever way you choose to contact us we will keep a record of your complaint and use it to improve our services.

About the Guaranteed Standards Scheme

Whenever we receive a customer complaint, we follow strict guidelines which tell us how quickly we must reply. These are set out in the Guaranteed Standards Scheme. You can find details of this scheme and our other customer service commitments in our booklet, 'Our standards of service'. You can download this booklet from our website unitedutilities.com/leaflets or by calling our 24-hour automated leaflet line on **0845 303 7711** textphone **0808 143 1195**.

Our guaranteed standards cover:

- Replying to bill queries
- Making and keeping appointments
- Responding to written complaints
- Giving you written notice for all planned interruptions to your water supply
- Restoring water supply following an emergency or burst
- Drops in water pressure
- Internal and external flooding to your buildings from the public sewer
- Turning off your water supply due to emergency drought restrictions



Telephone complaints

Making a complaint via the telephone is normally the quickest way of resolving any problem. We aim to deal with telephone complaints there and then. If we can't do this we will call you back within one working day.

Personal visits

If you call at one of our offices you should be able to talk to someone who will listen to your complaint and, wherever possible, sort it out for you. Please bear in mind that it is not always possible to do this at the time of your visit unless you have made an appointment. If they are unable to sort this out for you immediately they will explain what else needs to be done and arrange for someone to contact you with a response within 10 working days of your visit. We will record details of all the complaints we receive from people who visit our offices.

Anonymous complaints

Complaints which are made anonymously will be considered carefully and action taken where required.



Complaints

If you wish to complain you can contact us by telephone, letter, email, web or in person. To get the fastest solution please phone us and we will try to resolve it there and then.

**We aim to
reply within
10 working
days**

Regardless of how you choose to complain we will make sure that a named person is responsible for replying to you. We will give you a name and contact details in case you need to contact us again. We will also make sure that our reply meets any special requirements you may have, for example Braille.

We keep a record of customers who have told us they have extra needs because of age, illness or disability. If we know about your circumstances, or if you tell us about them when you complain, we will take this into account when we reply to you.

If you write to us we aim to respond within the 10 working days which follow the day that we receive your letter. In the unlikely event that we fail to meet this timescale, we will pay you £25 under our Guaranteed Standards Scheme automatically. We must make this payment within the 10 working days from the date we were due to provide you a response by. If we fail to do this you can claim a further £10.

**Give us a call
to discuss your
concern**



To get the fastest solution to your complaint please phone us and we will try to resolve your problem **there and then.**

Complaints procedure: A step-by-step guide

The following guide shows the steps you can take from making an initial complaint to escalating your complaint if you are not satisfied with our response to you.

Making a complaint

If you are unhappy with any aspect of the service you receive from us, please let us know. We will look into your complaint and respond to you.

Telephone **0845 309 3003**. Our telephone lines are open between 9am-5pm Mon-Fri (excluding Bank Holidays).

Or write to us at: **United Utilities
PO Box 453
Warrington
WA55 1SE**

Website: **unitedutilities.com**

A fresh look

If you are dissatisfied with our response to your complaint please let us know. We will then review your complaint. This will be done independently from the reply we originally gave you (see previous section on how to make a complaint) and by a more senior member of staff. Following this review we will contact you again with our findings.

Please note: If you need to get in touch with us regarding a water supply or billing query, please use the telephone numbers shown on the back of this booklet.

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Independent Customer Watchdog

If United Utilities has reviewed your complaint and you remain dissatisfied, you can refer your complaint to the Consumer Council for Water Northern. This is an independent body which represents customers' interests and investigates complaints.

Write to:
Consumer Council for Water Northern
Suite 902, 9th Floor, Bridgewater House,
Whitworth Street, Manchester M1 6LT.

Alternatively,
call **0845 705 6316** or **0161 236 6112**.
Fax: **0161 228 6117**
Minicom: **0121 345 1044**
Website: **ccwater.org.uk**

The Regulator

The Water Services Regulation Authority (OFWAT) has powers to settle disputes about the following issues:

- Compensation under the Guaranteed Standards Scheme.
- The charges and conditions set by a company for making connections to water mains.
- The terms and conditions for a non-domestic supply.
- The need for a customer's property to have a separate service pipe.
- The charges and conditions for providing a water main (requisition).
- The terms and conditions for the adoption of a self-laid main.
- The charges or disconnection costs that must be paid to a company before a business customer's supply is reconnected.
- A refusal to allow a customer to pay by measured charge because a meter is not practical or is unreasonably expensive to install.
- A refusal to allow private sewers and drains to be connected to public sewers, or a requirement to inspect the drain or sewer before allowing a connection.
- The costs and security a company asks for when it connects premises to a sewer.
- The charges and conditions for providing a sewer (requisition).
- A proposal or refusal to adopt sewers or sewage-disposal works, or about the conditions in an adoption agreement.
- The position or suitability of a drain or sewer to replace an existing private drainage system which the company considers to be unsuitable.
- The effectiveness of an alternative sewer that has been provided to replace an existing one that is due to be closed.
- A requirement that a proposed drain or sewer is built so it can become part of a general sewerage system.
- Pipelaying on private land.

Write to: Disputes and Complaints team, Ofwat,
Centre City Tower, 7 Hill Street, Birmingham B5 4UA.
Alternatively, call **0121 625 1300**.

Arbitration

This means bringing someone else in to try to settle a dispute. In some cases you will have the legal right to refer your dispute to arbitration. If we cannot agree on an arbitrator OFWAT, the Secretary of State For Environment, Food and Rural Affairs or the President of the Institution of Civil Engineers (depending on the dispute) will choose one. Matters that may be suitable for arbitration include:

- Disputes about compensation following the company's work in the street
- Positioning of water meters
- Disputes about the installation of water fittings (prevention of contamination).

Legal action

There may be cases where you consider taking legal action against us. You may decide to contact a solicitor about this.

We will tell you if we think any of these ways may help sort out your complaint.

Recording your complaint

We keep a record of all the complaints that we receive, regardless of the way the complaint is made. Each complaint that we receive is automatically date stamped and recorded on our computer system.

Confidentiality

We will treat all personal information you provide us with, as confidential. All information will be treated in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. We will only give information to someone else if we have the customer's permission to do so. We will only give information over the telephone if the caller can prove their identity by passing security questions, and it is either the customer or their authorised representative.

Putting things right

First, we will analyse the cause of your complaint to try to make sure that it does not happen again.

If we have made a mistake we will apologise and explain the cause of the mistake. Our aim is to put things right as soon as we can. If you have alleged a specific loss or damage due to our mistake we will usually need full details and receipts. We will also make checks to see if you are entitled to a payment under the Guaranteed Standards Scheme and our Customer Commitments Scheme.

If your complaint concerns a disputed debt, we will suspend our debt recovery activity until the complaint is resolved.

Special cases

If you make a complaint about one of our employees, a senior manager or director will look into it.

If the complaint is about alleged financial irregularity, our group audit manager will investigate. We will pass complaints about alleged criminal activity to our group security manager and then, if appropriate, the police.

Training

We have a continuous programme of employee training in all areas of customer service and in particular how to deal with customer complaints. This is to make sure that customers receive a consistent, polite and efficient service.

Standards of service

We keep a constant watch on the speed and quality of our replies. In addition to our own internal audits, the Consumer Council for Water carries out an annual assessment of our complaint responses. Reports are sent to OFWAT each year so that a comparison can be made of our performance with other water companies.

Getting in touch

If you have a complaint please phone us on one of the following numbers. Alternatively you can write to us, our address details are also shown below.

Your water and wastewater services

Call us on **0845 746 2200** or
textphone **0808 143 0295**.

Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm, Saturday
8am to 6pm and Sunday 8am to 12 noon.
You can also call us on these numbers to
report an emergency outside of these hours.

Your bill (if you have a water meter)

Call us on **0845 746 2222** or
textphone **0808 143 1195**.

Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm,
Saturday 8am to 5pm.

Alternatively you can write to us with your complaint at the following address:

United Utilities, PO Box 453,
Warrington WA55 1SE

unitedutilities.com

Your bill (if you do not have a water meter)

Call us on **0845 746 1100** or
textphone **0808 143 1195**.

Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm,
Saturday 8am to 5pm.

Other leaflets that may be of interest:

- Our standards of service
- A simple guide to pipes, drains and sewers
- Could you pay less with a water meter?
- Testing household water meters
- A simple guide to paying your water bill
- Extracare
- A guide to using water wisely
- Watersure
- Replacing lead and common supply pipes

All our leaflets are available to download from our website: unitedutilities.com/leaflets. Alternatively, please call our 24-hour automated leaflet request line on **0845 303 7711** or textphone **0808 143 1195**, or write to: United Utilities (Dept LR), 1050 Europa Boulevard, Warrington WA55 1LR.

All our booklets are available in large print, Braille and on audio cassette.

If English is not your main language, we may be able to help you. We translate all our key service booklets into: Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Chinese, Bengali and Punjabi. Please call us on **0845 746 1100** or textphone **0808 143 1195** to request a copy.

Your bill

To discuss your bill call **0845 746 1100** (if you don't have a water meter) or **0845 746 2222** (if you have a water meter) or textphone **0808 143 1195**.

Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm, Saturday 8am to 5pm.

Or write to: United Utilities, PO Box 459, Warrington, WA55 1WB.

Your water and wastewater services

To report problems with your water or wastewater services call **0845 746 2200** or textphone **0808 143 0295**. Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm, Saturday 8am to 6pm, Sunday 8am to 12 noon. Emergency service out of hours.

Or write to: United Utilities, PO Box 453, Warrington, WA55 1SE.

unitedutilities.com

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Lingley Mere Business Park
Lingley Green Avenue
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