

Household charges 2019/2020

- at a glance



From making a brew to flushing the loo, most of us never give a moment's thought to where our water comes from, or where it goes to once it disappears round the U-bend.

But behind the scenes, we run a massive 24-hour operation to keep your life flowing smoothly, delivering safe clean water to your home and taking away and cleaning your dirty water.

This factsheet provides a brief overview of our water services charges for the 2019/2020 charging year. You'll find lots more detail on our website unitedutilities.com/my-bill. Here you can also download a copy of our full charges scheme which goes into a lot more detail than what's included here.

A breakdown of your bill

Take a look at your last water bill, and you'll notice that it is split into two parts:

1. Water charges

If you have a water meter, you are charged per cubic metre of water used. A cubic metre is the equivalent of 3,300 cups of tea or 28 showers! You also pay a standing charge per year, which covers basic services not related to the amount of water you use, such as reading and maintaining your water meter, sending bills and answering customer enquiries (See **Table 1**).

If you don't have a water meter, your bill is fixed each year based on the rateable value for your home, regardless of how much water you use. You are charged based on your home's 'rateable value' (see footnote) plus a standing charge per year, which pays for customer services costs such as sending out bills and answering customer enquiries. The standing charge also helps to make bills fairer. Without it, customers with very low rateable values would tend to pay too little in relation to their likely water use and customers with high rateable values would tend to pay too much (See **Table 2**).

Footnote: Rateable value is based around the potential rental value of your home and it was set by the Valuation Office. It is the traditional method for working out water bills if you don't have a water meter. You can find out lots more about rateable value here unitedutilities.com/rv

Table 1 - Charges if you have a water meter

Water		Sewerage			
Standing charge per year	Volumetric charge per m ³	Standing charge per year	Foul drainage Volumetric charge per m ³	Surface water drainage Fixed charge per year	Highway drainage Fixed charge per year
£31.05	£1.922	£6.84	£1.269	£73.03	£32.13

Table 2 - Charges if you don't have a water meter

Water		Sewerage		
Standing charge per year	Charge per £CV/RV	Foul drainage charge per £CV/RV	Surface water drainage charge per £CV/RV	Highway drainage charge per £CV/RV
£68.86	£1.130	£1.044	£0.560	£0.145

2. Sewerage charges

There's more to sewerage (referred to as wastewater on our bills) than you might think! This part of your bill pays for removing and treating three different types of sewerage:

- **Foul drainage:** this is the used water that drains into our sewer system when you use the shower, flush the loo or use your washing machine.
- **Surface water drainage:** this is the rainwater which falls on your home, which drains into our sewer system. We refer to this as rainwater removal on our bills.
- **Highway drainage:** this is the rainwater which falls on roads and highways, which also ultimately finds its way into our sewer system. We refer to this as rainwater removal on our bills.

If you have a water meter, your foul drainage charge is based on the amount of water you use at home – given that most of this water goes down the drain. You pay per cubic metre of water used for foul drainage; a fixed charge per year for surface water drainage, a fixed charge for highway drainage and a standing charge per year towards customer service costs such as reading and maintaining the meter, sending bills and answering customer enquiries (See **Table 1**).

If you don't have a water meter, you pay based on the rateable value for your home (See **Table 2**).

Who pays the bill – and when?

Normally, it is the occupier of the property who pays the bill. Even if you are just renting a home, the bill landing on the doormat will usually have your name on it.

In some circumstances, however, it's more practical for the bill to go to the owner of a home, instead of the tenant. A good example of this is a student house, where there are lots of separate tenants who never stay very long. These arrangements, do, of course, have to be agreed with us first.

If you don't have a water meter, you'll usually receive a bill from us once a year, normally payable in advance either annually, half-yearly or in monthly instalments. If an instalment is not paid on time, the whole balance of your charges becomes due.

If you do have a water meter, you'll usually receive a bill every six months which is payable on demand. Alternatively you can arrange to pay by a monthly payment plan.

It's worth being aware that if you own an empty property, you will still receive a bill from us, if it remains connected to our water network, and continues to benefit from our services.

We will not charge you if the property is vacant and receives no services from us, unless you have a meter and there is evidence of consumption. We will continue to charge for properties undergoing renovation.

Reductions in charges

It's worth checking that you are not being charged for a service that you don't actually use.

Here are the most common ways to reduce your charges:

Surface water drainage (also known as rainwater removal on our bills): we charge you for taking away and treating the rainwater that falls onto your home (see 'a breakdown of your bill' on the previous page).

Some houses, however, are drained naturally. The rainwater flows directly into a brook, stream, or underground soak-away, without ever entering our sewer system.

To qualify for a reduction in your charges, you need to prove that all the rainwater that falls on your house (including your roof, garden, drive, patio, yard etc.) drains directly into the ground or a watercourse such as a brook or stream – without ever entering our sewer pipes.

You'll need to carry out some detective work to find out for sure. There's plenty of information at unitedutilities.com/surface-water-drainage to help you, along with a claim form which should be completed when making your claim.

If your claim is successful, the charge for surface water drainage of **£73.03** per year if you have a water meter, will no longer apply. If you do not have a water meter your rateable value charge will reduce to **£1.189** per £CV/RV. Any reduction in charges will be made for up to six years, dependent on circumstances.

Foul drainage: if the foul drainage from your home (e.g. used water from your loo, dishwasher etc.) does not drain into our public sewers, then you'll qualify for reduced charges for that part of your bill.

If you have a water meter, the volumetric charge for foul drainage will be waived. If you do not have a water meter your charge for sewerage services will be **£0.705** for each pound of the rateable value for your house.

The same charges apply if you have a septic tank and only the foul drainage from your house drains into our sewers via that tank.

Non-return allowance: if you have a water meter and more than five per cent of the water supplied to your home is not returned to the sewer, you may claim (using our form) for an allowance against the total sewerage volumetric charge payable. We will assess any such allowance on the basis of the information you provide. The allowance will be given from the date your application is received.

Can I choose to have a water meter?

If you don't already have a water meter you can choose to have one installed free of charge. With a water meter you only pay for the water you use, so the more water you save, the more money you save. You can apply for a free meter by telephoning us or via our website at unitedutilities.com/meters

If you decide to have a meter and then change your mind or are not making the saving you expected, then you have up to two years from the date the meter was installed to change back to be charged based up on the rateable value for your house. Please note the meter would remain and would be used to charge any future occupier of the property.

Although we provide and install water meters free of charge, you do have to pay for the following services:

- **Installing your meter outside:** our preference is always to install a meter inside, free of charge. If you wish to have a meter installed outside and we agree to this, you'll have to pay to have it installed – usually around **£194.94 plus VAT**.
- **Moving your meter:** If you want your water meter moving from one internal location to another, the work will need to be done according to our specifications, and will have to be inspected by us once completed. We charge an inspection fee of **£60.77 plus VAT** for this service.
- **Testing your meter:** If you think that your meter might be playing up, we can take it away to be tested. If the meter is okay you'll have to pay for the cost of the test, which is currently **£70.00 plus VAT**. If it fails there's no charge and we will correct your bill. You can find out more at unitedutilities.com/leaflets

Assessed charges if we can't install a water meter

Occasionally, it's not possible to install a water meter at all. For example, if you share your water supply with other properties, you have more than one supply of water to your house or your pipework is faulty, we may have to deliver an apologetic 'no'.

If that happens to you, all is not lost. You'll be given the option to go on an assessed charge, as an alternative to being charged by rateable value (See **Table 3**).

Table 3 - Assessed charges if you can't have a water meter installed

Type of premises	Water charge per year	Sewerage charge per year	Total charge per year
Single person household	£100.65	£174.35	£275.00
Detached (includes houses, link-detached and detached bungalows)*	£253.00	£274.57	£527.57
Semi-detached (includes houses and semi-detached bungalows)*	£228.24	£258.30	£486.54
Other household premises (includes flats and terraced houses)*	£167.21	£218.17	£385.38
Larger properties - a property which either: (i) has a swimming pool with a capacity larger than 10,000 litres; or (ii) is larger than 250m ² and has six or more bedrooms.	£474.97	£419.54	£894.51

*excludes properties which meet the larger property criteria

Note: If your premises are not connected to the public sewer system for surface water drainage, either directly or indirectly, the sewerage charge for each type of premises will be reduced by **£73.03** per year.

Leaks on your pipework

If you have a burst or leak at your house, and it turns out to be on your outside water supply pipe, there's a chance we can repair it for you free of charge. We may also be able to refund you for the cost of the lost water (assuming you have a water meter, it's your first leak and it's repaired quickly).

You can find out more about the help we provide at unitedutilities.com/bursthome, or by calling **0345 672 2999**.

Billing mistakes

We hate making mistakes. If you believe that you have been billed incorrectly, please contact us as soon as you can and we'll look into it and put things right straight away if we find a mistake.

We always try to resolve problems quickly, and with a minimum of fuss. If you feel you are not getting results, please visit unitedutilities.com/complaints-procedure for information on how to make a complaint. We hope it won't come to that!

Ways to pay

Direct debit, over the counter, post...we offer a wide range of payment methods suited to your particular circumstances. And if you choose to pay by direct debit, we'll give you an annual **£5.00** discount off your bill.

Visit unitedutilities.com/my-bill for full details on all the various options.

If you pay your water services bill directly to a registered social landlord, or local authority that bill and collect water services charges on our behalf, an annual discount of **£10.00** will be applied to your bill.

My account

If using the internet makes your life easier, you can use our online account service. Register now at unitedutilities.com/myaccount to pay your bill, give a meter reading, update your personal details and switch to paperless billing too.

A helping hand when you're struggling to pay

There's nothing worse than feeling down when your water bill lands on the doormat.

If you're going through a tough financial patch and are finding it hard to meet your payments, do get in touch. We're easy to talk to, and the last thing we want to do is leave you high and dry. Don't worry, everything you tell us is strictly confidential, so please either email us or call us on **0800 072 6765**.

We run a range of support schemes suited to different financial circumstances. These include:

- **Payment Matching Plus scheme:** if you've already built up a lot of debt, this scheme could help you get back in the black. For every £1 you pay, we'll pay £1 too. After six months, we'll increase our contribution to £2 for every £1 you pay. If you continue to make regular payments for two years, we'll clear any remaining debt. We decide who is accepted for this scheme based on their circumstances.
- **WaterSure:** Our WaterSure scheme helps customers with water meters or who are charged on assessed charges who receive benefits and also face the financial pressures of a big household, or have a family member with a medical condition that requires the use of large amounts of water.

- **United Utilities Trust Fund:** if you are in real financial difficulty and have nowhere else to turn, you may qualify for a grant to pay off your bill – giving you the fresh start you need.
- **Back on Track scheme:** This is a scheme to help our customers on low incomes who are struggling to pay their water bill. The scheme is available to customers who are in arrears with their water services charges and in receipt of certain eligible benefits.
- **Help to pay scheme:** If you are entitled to receive Pension Credit (either Pension Guarantee Credit or Pension Savings Credit) you may be eligible for our help to pay scheme which means that your water services charges will be capped at **£255.00** per year for households where the qualifying person is the only adult living at the premises, and **£360.00** for other households with a qualifying person.
- **Payment Break:** if you have a low income or receive benefits and are struggling due to losing your job or having to pay out for an unexpected emergency, we can delay your bill payments for an agreed period of time.
- **Help with Universal Credit:** we can delay your water bill payments for up to eight weeks until your first Universal Credit payment arrives.

You can find out more details about these schemes by visiting our website unitedutilities.com/difficulty-paying-bill or calling **0800 072 6765**.

Failed payments

We have the right to recover administrative charges which result from failed cheques, standing orders or direct debits. The current charge for dealing with each failed payment is **£5.00**.

How we manage your personal details

Your personal information is very important and this is why we're careful with the information we collect and process about you in order to manage your account. We use credit reference agency (CRA) data, trace and debt collection agencies and other third parties to supplement your details, carry out an identity and verification check as well as trace and locate customers including non-payers to assist us in appropriately managing your account. This will involve passing your information to one or more of the above. Debt collection searches and/or trace searches will leave a footprint on your credit file. We also share how you manage your payments and whether you pay us or not with CRAs (and where fraud is suspected, fraud prevention agencies (FPAs)). If you miss or make late payments we will also share this information and an outstanding balance with the CRAs. If you fail to pay us or keep up to date with your agreed payment arrangement then your account will be deemed to be in default. We will issue you a 'Notice of Intention to Default' letter giving you a deadline date to make the required payment. If you do not make this payment by the due date, we will let the CRAs know and a default will be registered on your credit file. We share information on existing and new accounts.

Sharing missed or late payments and/or default information, as well as debt search footprints and/or County Court Judgment (CCJ) information (if we have applied to the courts for a CCJ) with CRAs may affect your ability to gain credit. Records remain on CRA files for six years after they are closed, whether the debt has been settled or not. CRAs (and

FPA) may supply this information to other organisations to perform similar checks, to trace your whereabouts, recover any debts you may owe and help determine whether to provide credit to you. To assist us in managing your account, we may also buy in data from reputable organisations. Calls are recorded for quality, training, service and security purposes.

Please visit unitedutilities.com/privacy for further information or call our general enquiries number shown on your bill to discuss your account.

How to contact us

Written enquiries

You can write to us at:
United Utilities Water Limited
PO Box 50
Warrington
WA55 1AQ

Telephone enquiries

Water services billing enquiries

If you have a water meter:
0345 672 2999

If you don't have a water meter:
0345 672 2888

Water and wastewater operational enquiries

0345 672 3723

If you have hearing or speech difficulties and use a textphone, please dial 18001 before the number you require.

We also operate an emergency service out of hours; calls are diverted to our emergency call handling team. To report an emergency with your water or wastewater supply please call **0345 672 3723** (24 hours a day). You can also find out about emergency incidents for your area by visiting our website at: unitedutilities.com/emergencies

Land and highway drains in all areas are the responsibility of your local council.

Publications

You can download the following information leaflets from our website at unitedutilities.com/leaflets

- Water meter application pack
- Surface water drainage - household
- WaterSure application pack
- A guide to using water wisely
- Our leakage code of practice
- Debt recovery: our code of practice
- Our standards of service
- A guide to our Priority Services
- Our complaints procedure
- A guide to paying your water bill
- A simple guide to pipes, drains and sewers
- Replacing lead and common supply pipes
- Testing your household water meter

These leaflets are available in large print and Braille. Please call us on **0345 672 2888** to order a leaflet in any of these formats.



About us

United Utilities is the North West's water company. We keep the taps flowing and toilets flushing for seven million customers every day. From Crewe to Carlisle, we work hard behind the scenes to help your life flow smoothly.