



Help when you need it most

A guide to our
Priority Services

Introduction

Help when you need it most

We can all benefit from a bit of extra support at some stage in our lives. This could be due to age, ill health, disability, mental-health problems, financial worries or language barriers.

Our Priority Services are free and registering allows us to help our customers who would benefit the most from extra support and respond quickly to their particular needs.

This leaflet explains the support that is available if you register for Priority Services. If you do not feel you need these services, please consider whether a family member, friend or neighbour would benefit from Priority Services and pass this information to them. Our Priority Services are available to our customers who live in the North West area. You do not have to be the named bill payer to benefit from Priority Services.

It's easy to register for Priority Services.

- Call us on **0345 072 6093**
- Visit **unitedutilities.com/priorityservices** and fill in the online form
- Fill in the enclosed application form and post it back to us

Section 1

Priority Services... communicating with you

Dedicated team on hand to help

When you register for Priority Services, you get access to a dedicated team specially trained to help with your questions.

You can also tell us how you would like us to contact you and we will use that method for all future communications. Remember, we treat everything you tell us in the strictest confidence.

Nominee scheme

If you have difficulty communicating or find it hard to understand your bill and other information you receive from us, you can nominate a carer, family member or friend to speak to us on your behalf. This person could also call us to register you for Priority Services if you cannot fill in the enclosed form or talk to us yourself.

We can also send your bill to the person you nominate, but please remember that you will still be responsible for paying the bill.

Text Relay service

If you have hearing or speech difficulties and use a textphone, you can access our Text Relay service by dialling 18001 followed by the number you need. This service applies to all the numbers shown in this booklet. Your call will be connected to a Text Relay service, through which one of our customer service agents will be able to help with your enquiry. If you ever need a face-to-face meeting with us, we can also arrange for a sign-language interpreter to be at the meeting if this would be helpful.

Braille, large print and ‘talking’ bills

If you have sight difficulties, we can produce your bill in Braille or large print. We can also phone you to talk you through your bill to make sure you understand what you are paying for.

Password scheme

When you register for Priority Services you can choose a password. Then, if we ever need to visit you at home, we will give you the password so you know the caller is genuine. This will help to protect you from bogus callers (people who pretend to be from United Utilities to gain access to your home).

And, if you tell us you have mobility needs, when we call at your home we will wait outside for a much longer period of time after knocking to allow you enough time to answer the door.

Translation services

If you would prefer to talk to us in a language other than English, we can arrange an interpreter, free of charge, to communicate with you using our 'language line' translation service when you call us.

When you register for Priority Services, you can also ask to receive communications from us in your preferred language.

Leaflets available on our website

Our website contains all our information leaflets so you can download them without having to contact us.

We can translate these leaflets if you would like them in a different language.

Webchat

You can communicate with us on our website using our online webchat service.

Section 2

Priority Services... and your water supply

Notice of interruptions to your water supply

Occasionally, we may need to turn off your water supply, either because a pipe has burst or because we're doing some important maintenance work.

If we have to turn off your water to carry out planned maintenance work, we will put a card through your letterbox beforehand to tell you when this will be happening. If you are blind, partially sighted or have difficulties reading or understanding English, we will contact you in the way you asked us to when you registered for Priority Services.

There will be times when it's not possible to tell you before we need to turn your water off, for example if there is a burst water main. If this happens we will contact you in the way you have asked us to, to make sure you are kept informed about what is happening.

Alternative water supplies

If your water supply is likely to be off for more than 12 hours, we will try to make water available in your area using other means. We will contact you in an emergency to understand how we can help, which may include delivering a supply of bottled water to your home.

Support for dialysis patients

We provide extra help if you need dialysis at home. We'll contact you as soon as possible if we need to turn off your water supply in an emergency such as a burst water main, and try to time any planned shut-offs, so they don't happen on the day of your dialysis.

Your hospital should have already registered your details with us if you have dialysis at home, but you can also tell us this when you register for Priority Services.

If there is a burst water main which means we need to turn your water supply off, our dedicated team will contact you, in your preferred way, as soon as we can.

Flooding

If you are a Priority Services customer and suffer flooding from the sewers, you can contact our dedicated team and we will arrange to visit your home to help with cleaning up the mess. If you have to move out of your home while we clean up, we'll suspend your bills during the time you're away from your home.

Help with your water meter

If you have a water meter in your home but find it difficult to get to it or read it due to a disability, we may be able to help by moving the meter to a more accessible place, as long as your plumbing arrangements allow this. If you are blind or partially sighted, we can also arrange for your meter to be read every three months to help you keep track of how much water you are using.

Section 3

Priority Services... when you're struggling to pay your water bill

We all have times when it can be difficult to make ends meet. Losing a job, divorce, a death in the family, or illness can all have a major effect on household income and cause a strain on your finances.

If you're struggling to pay your water bill, our message is simple – don't suffer in silence. We're easy to talk to, and the last thing we want is for you to worry about it.

As a Priority Services customer, you have access to a dedicated team who can offer advice and support to make sure that your bills are not keeping you awake at night. We have a range of support schemes to help you depending on your circumstances.

- **Payment matching:** if you've already built up a lot of debt, this scheme could help you get back on track. If we accept you on this scheme, for every £1 you pay off your debt, we'll pay £1 off it too, helping you to clear your debt twice as quickly.
- **Water Direct:** if you are in debt and receive income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Universal Credit, Pension Credit or income-related Employment and Support Allowance, you can ask the Department for Work and Pensions to pay your water bill direct to us out of your benefit.

- **Restart grant:** if you are in real financial difficulty and have nowhere else to turn, you may qualify for a grant from the United Utilities Trust Fund to pay off your debt – giving you the fresh start you need.
- **Help to Pay:** if you receive Pension Credit and are struggling to pay your bill, you may be eligible to apply. If we accept you on the scheme, we will cap your bill at a fixed amount for the year.
- **WaterSure:** if you have a water meter installed in your home and you use a lot of water for essential purposes, you may benefit from our WaterSure scheme. The scheme caps your charges at the average bill amount no matter how much water you use. The scheme is available to customers who receive certain benefits and either have a large family or a member of the household has a medical condition which means they use a lot of water.

You may be better off with a water meter

A water meter can be a great way of reducing your bill. If you live on your own, or as a couple, it is well worth checking if you could make savings by having a meter fitted.

Water meters are free, and you can always change back to a fixed bill within 24 months of having the meter fitted if you haven't made the savings you were expecting.

Call us on **0345 072 6093** to find out more. You can also apply online by visiting **unitedutilities.com/meters**.

Section 4

Register for Priority Services today

It's easy to register for Priority Services, you can:

- phone our team on **0345 072 6093** between 8am - 8pm Monday to Friday and 8am-4pm Saturday;
- visit **unitedutilities.com/priorityservices** and fill in the online form; or
- fill in the enclosed application form and post it back to us.

Don't forget to also contact your gas and electricity suppliers to register for their Priority Service Register, as we are not allowed to pass your details to other companies. Also, if you ever move outside the North West, you will need to contact your new water supplier to register for their Priority Services scheme.

Do you know someone who needs a little extra help? If a neighbour, friend or family member would benefit from Priority Services, please ask them to give us call on **0345 072 6093**.

**Your Priority Services registration
form is enclosed**



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