

Charges, Bills and Meters

Code of Practice

Charges, bills and meters

Every five years we share our business plan with Ofwat and agree with them how much money the company will need to provide and look after water and wastewater services across the region. This amount is what your bills contribute towards. We always make sure that your bills are the lowest they can be.

This leaflet explains what types of bills there are, how they are calculated and how you can pay them. It also gives helpful pointers on meters.



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What are the different types of charges?

1. Unmetered charges

These charges are based on the rateable value of your home (an assessment of the annual rental value of your property in 1990). We use data gathered by Inland Revenue's valuation office (31st March 1990) to find out the rateable value of your home.

Note: All new houses since 1990 are built with a water meter installed.

2. Metered charges

We try our best to read your meter at least once a year. Sometimes, this isn't possible, for example, when there's something blocking access to the meter, like a car. When we can't read your meter, we'll send you an estimated bill based on previous water use at the property. If you receive an estimated bill, you can read the meter yourself and send us the reading - we'll be more than happy to re-calculate your bill and send you a revised version.

3. Assessed charges

For those customers who want a meter but we're unable to fit one at their property. These charges are based on the average use of water in properties of a similar size, and the number of people living there.

Unmetered and metered charges have two parts: a fixed charge and a variable charge.

Fixed charge

This covers some of the costs that aren't dependent on the rateable value of your home, and don't change with the amount of water you use.

Variable charge

This covers the costs of collecting, treating, and transporting drinking water to your home. This will vary depending on the rateable value of your home and, if you're metered, how much water you use.

Questions about our charges

What is surface water and highway drainage?

Surface Water

Rainwater that falls onto your property

Highway drainage

Rainwater that falls onto the road

In most cases, this rainwater drains into the public sewer, and we include the cost of removing it into your sewerage charges. Everyone connected to our sewer network pays a contribution towards the cost of highway drainage.

Where can I get a list of your charges?

We review and update our charges every year. You can find all the information on this year's charges by reading our Household Charges Scheme, or by calling our Accounts Team on 0344 346 1010.

Who is legally liable for the charges?

The occupier (the owner, or tenant) of a property is responsible for paying the water bill, unless we have a written agreement that says otherwise. For example, a landlord may pay the bill instead of the tenant.

Bills

When can I pay my bill?

Unmetered charges:

Your bill is automatically payable in full on 1st April. However, you can set up a payment plan, and choose to pay in 2, 10 or 12 instalments.

2 instalments

The first on 1st April, the second on 1st October.

10 instalments

Between April and January.*

12 instalments

Paid monthly over the year.

*If you ask to use this option after April, the charges will be spread out equally over the remaining months so that they're settled by January.

Metered charges:

You can choose to pay in 4 or 12 instalments.

4 instalments

Every three months

12 instalments

Paid monthly over the year, under our metered payment plan.

For all types of charges, we also offer ways to pay bills more frequently, such as fortnightly or weekly plans. Call our Accounts Team on 0344 346 1010 for more information.

Ways to pay

When it comes to paying your bill, there are a number of different methods you can choose from. These are:

Online

You can pay through MyAccount on our website.

By Direct Debit or Standing Order

You can set these up by giving us a call on 0344 346 1010 and via MyAccount.

By telephone

Just call our automated payment line on 0800 230 0750.

At the bank or Post Office

Just take along your bill and they'll help you out. Some banks now charge for this service. Customers can go to any Lloyds bank, you maybe charged a small fee for payments made in cash.

Using any PayPoint outlet

These are free to use.

By post

Our address can be found at the back of this leaflet.
Please don't send cash in the post.

Important: If you're paying by cheque, please make it out to 'Bournemouth Water Ltd'.

Questions about bills

What happens if you undercharge me?

We do all we can to make sure your bill is as accurate as possible. But, in the case of an error, we reserve the right to make necessary changes to past and future bills. If there's clear evidence that the undercharging is due to a failure or error on our part, we'll backdate our charges for the current financial year only.

Do you offer help for people with additional needs?

We offer a range of services for customers who have trouble reading their bills or meter. When you register for our Priority Services, you can be sure we'll do our best to support you where we can.

To find out more, please visit our website:

southwestwater.co.uk/priority-services

Or, call our Accounts Team on 0344 346 1010
(Minicom users: 0800 169 9965).

Problems paying your bill?

If you have any difficulties paying your bill, please visit:

southwestwater.co.uk/financial-support. Or call our team on 0344 346 1010; there are things they can and will do to help you, including:

Checking your payment information is correct on our system.

Look into your charges and suggest ways that you can lower your bill.

Discuss your personal circumstances to make sure you're on the best payment plan or tariff for you.

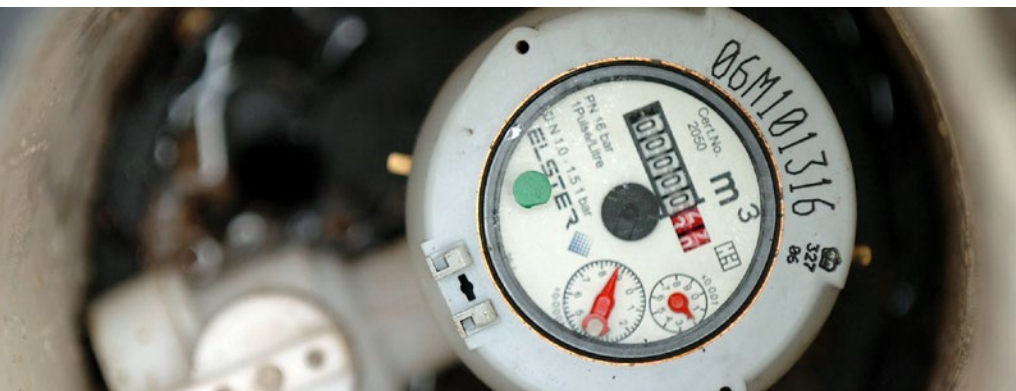
More about meters

Many of our customers benefit from switching to a meter. Having a meter means you pay for the water you use.

Some of the benefits of going on a meter:

- The switch is free, and you don't need permission from your landlord to get one installed (unless your tenancy is less than six months long)
- You have two years to decide if it's for you, and you can switch back at any time during these years
- Our Lowest Bill Guarantee shows you the difference between your metered and unmetered bill, and you'll only pay the cheapest one
- You could save, on average, between £300 and £400 per year
- Having a meter allows you access to our financial help should you need it (subject to other criteria)

The meter will remain in place and, if you move house, the new occupier will be charged on a metered basis. Find out more at: southwestwater.co.uk/switch-to-a-meter.



Questions about meters

Who has a water meter and who is responsible?

All new houses since 1990 are built with a water meter installed. Many of our customers who live in older houses have had one fitted. This means that most of the homes in our region now have water meters. The meter and its connections are our responsibility.

Can I choose my meter location?

We normally install meters externally where a meter box already exists. Where a meter box does not exist, we'll agree with you either an external or internal location. We'll advise you on our preferred location.

If you'd like the meter installed in a different location, you can request this, and we'll fit it there as long as it is possible to do so.

Sometimes, this incurs additional costs, and you would have to pay these. If you're on our Priority Services Register and request a different meter location so it can be read more easily, we'll consider waiving these costs.

Are meters accurate?

We pride ourselves that our meters are very reliable. But, if you think your meter is not recording your usage accurately, please...

1. Contact us

Call our Accounts Team on 01202 590059, or reach out online, and we'll investigate it for you.

2. We test your meter following investigation

If, following our investigation you still have concerns, we'll send you an application form to get the accuracy of your meter tested.

Your meter will be sent to a Trading Standards approved test centre in accordance with the provisions under the Water (Meter) Regulations 1988.

3. We install a new meter

We'll install a new meter at your property and send you a copy of the test.

- If the test shows the meter is working properly, you will be charged up to £70 for the test.
- If your meter is found to be over-recording, we'll amend your bill.
- If your meter is found to be under-recording, we won't adjust your bill.

More details can be found in our Household Charges Scheme.

How often should I check my meter?

We recommend you read your meter once a month. This not only helps you keep your bills accurate, it also means you can spot any leaks early.

Details of how to check your meter, what to do if you have a leak and how we can help, are available at southwestwater.co.uk/leaks.



What is a common billing agreement?

Sometimes, in a block of flats, it's not possible to fit a meter for each individual apartment. This could be due to shared plumbing, or a shared connection to the water main. In this circumstance, we can fit one meter under a common billing agreement.

To do this, we would need:

1. Each occupier to confirm in writing that they're happy with this arrangement
2. Someone to accept responsibility for receiving and paying the bill for all the properties included in the agreement. This could be the managing agent, landlord, or freeholder.
 - We'll check whether this person or organisation is in a financial position to do so before agreeing to a common billing arrangement.
 - Once a meter is installed, it will be up to this person or organisation to work out how the bill is split between the occupants. This will be a private matter, and we suggest it is agreed before applying for a common billing agreement.

Part of the agreement will be that if a bill isn't paid, or the person/organisation responsible for paying gives up that responsibility without arranging someone else to replace them, charges will go back to standard unmeasured/unmetered charges for the individual properties. Individual bills will be issued from the start of any period for which there are unpaid charges.

Moving home

If you're moving home, we need to know 4 working days before. This is so we can update your account, and, if applicable, arrange your final meter reading. You can let us know about your move by calling us; online by logging into MyAccount; or writing to us. We'll need to know your forwarding address so that we can send you your final bill.

Your responsibility for the water charges usually stops on the day you move out. Remember to give us your last meter reading!

Moving within the area

With your permission, we'll transfer any balance over to your new address, and we'll charge you according to your new property details from the day you move in. If you move into a property where there's already a meter, you'll be charged on this basis. You won't be able to switch to unmeasured/unmetered charges.

Moving out of the area

We'll send you a final bill to your new address for anything you owe, or, if you've overpaid, we'll send you a refund.

Important

If you give us less than 2 days' notice of your move, you'll remain responsible for metered charges up to:

- 28 days after we find that you're no longer responsible for the account, OR
- The date the meter is normally read (the end of the charging period), OR
- The date a new occupier tells us they're responsible for the account.

Contact us

Phone

0344 346 1010

to talk about your billing or account

0344 346 2020

about your water supply or wastewater services

SignLive

Register at: signlive.co.uk/login

Relay

Contact us via Relay UK through
the app or by dialling 18001 before
the helpline number

Social Media

WhatsApp
Facebook
Twitter
Webchat

Post

South West Water
PO Box 4762
Worthing
BN11 9NT

Website

For more information,
please visit:
[southwestwater.co.uk/
your-account](https://southwestwater.co.uk/your-account)



This document is one of a series setting out key information for customers about our services, including charges and the support we offer during an incident.

To see other documents with key information, use the QR code or the link below.

southwestwater.co.uk/important-information



This leaflet is available in other languages, large print, and braille.