

Water advice

May 2024

This factsheet offers tips on reducing water bills and how to save water.

It provides information on switching to a meter and how you can get help with the costs of water if you are eligible for the WaterSure bill cap Scheme.

The information in this factsheet is correct for the period May 2024 to April 2025.

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Water companies are not allowed to disconnect you for water arrears. Instead, they can take court action to recover the debt. It can harm your credit rating if you fall behind with payments. If you are struggling to pay your water bill, contact your water company to see how they can help. Each water company has a code of practice for customers owing money and can provide you with a copy.

Many offer budget schemes and hardship funds, which can help you clear your debt (see section 5). If you are a tenant, make sure you are charged the right amount of money for your water (see section 6).

If you are in arrears and claim certain benefits such as Pension Credit, you may be able to arrange to have regular payments (‘direct debit’) from your benefits paid directly to your water company.

If you live in rented property, you may be liable to pay water charges as part of your rent. These are not covered by Housing Benefit or Universal Credit. If you are not able to pay your water charge element, you will be in rent arrears and your landlord can start eviction proceedings.

If you do not claim any benefits but are struggling financially, get a benefit check. This can look at whether you might be entitled to benefits such as Pension Credit, Attendance Allowance or Personal Independence Payment. Contact Age UK Advice or Age Cymru Advice or your local Age UK or Age Cymru to get a benefit check. See also the Age UK online benefit calculator at www.ageuk.org.uk/benefits-check

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WaterSure schemes offer help with the cost of your water supply. You must have a water meter or be waiting to have one fitted and either someone in your household has a medical condition that causes significant extra water use, or you have three or more children under the age of 16.

Anyone reselling water or sewerage services should not charge more than the amount they are charged by the water company, plus a reasonable administration charge. Maintenance costs for water or sewerage pipework are not included in this. Costs are usually recovered through the tenant's rent or by separate agreement.

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Water companies keep a Priority Services register of consumers who may need extra help if their water supply is interrupted or with the way their services

Replace worn washers on leaky taps. A dripping hot water tap wastes energy and over a year can add to your annual water bill.

Take sh8

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The CCW website has a water meter calculator that can estimate if you can cut your water bills by

you do not know in advance how much your annual bill is going to be, as it varies depending on how much water you use in the year, as with other utility bills

if you lose water through a leak on pipework beyond the meter, you may have to pay for it, although allowance may be made if this is the first time since it was installed.

Water companies sometimes offer leak detection services to domestic consumers when installing a water meter. This can be free or at your expense. Leaks that can be repaired without significant excavation are sometimes repaired free of charge.

Sometimes it is impractical or too expensive for a water company to fit a meter because, for example, the work involves separating the pipe work in a tower block. A company can refuse to install a meter when asked by a customer, but they must offer you an assessed charge bill that more closely reflects your household water use. You then have an option to stay on your current unmetered bill or switch to the assessed one.

Different water companies calculate the assessed charge in different ways. It can be based on the number of occupants, type of property, number of bedrooms, or average household charge.

All companies offer a single person assessed charge to closely reflect what a single person would have paid if it was possible to install a meter. Once you know the charge, compare it with your current bill to see if you can save money.

You will not be offered an assessed charge unless you apply for a meter, or you are in an area with a compulsory metering programme and it is not possible to install a meter in your home.

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You may be responsible for repairing water leaks inside your property and in external pipes up to the boundary of your property. Some water companies offer free repair services for external leaks so check with them whether this is possible.

If a leak is in your supply pipe and not covered by a water company's free repair service, you are responsible for repairing it. If the leak is not repaired within a certain time, the water company may carry out the repair and charge you for the work.

If you own your own home, check whether your home insurance contents policy covers repairs for water leaks.

If you rent your home, your landlord may have responsibility for paying for and arranging a leak to be fixed.

In [section 5.1 of factsheet 67](#),
for more information. In [section 7 of factsheet 67w](#),

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Water companies are legally entitled to install meters in areas that have been declared as being seriously water stressed. Many of these are in the Southeast of England. Customers in these areas, are being switched over to water meters and if you live in one of these areas, you will have no choice on how you are charged.

If it is not possible to fit a meter at your home, you may be placed on an assessed charge, which is a fixed amount that more closely matches the amount of water your household uses. Your water company can insist you have a water meter installed if you have a swimming pool, power shower, large bath or garden sprinkler.

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Surface water is the rainwater that drains from a property into a sewer. The water company collects and treats this water and charges customers for the service.

England or Wales go to www.citizensadvice.org.uk
In England telephone 0800 144 8848
In Wales telephone 0800 702 2020

National network of advice centres offering free, confidential, independent advice, face to face or by telephone.

www.ccwater.org.uk
Telephone 0300 034 2222 (England) Mon-Fri 08.30-17.00
Telephone 0300 034 3333 (Wales) Mon-Fri 08.30-17.00

Independent voice for water consumers. If you are not satisfied with the way a water company deals with your complaint, contact CCW.

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency

For information and update reports on drought and flooding in England.

<https://naturalresources.wales/>

Provide information and reports on drought and flooding in Wales.

www.ofwat.gov.uk
Telephone 0121 644 7500

Independent regulatory body who monitor and regulate water companies

www.trustmark.org.uk
Telephone 0333 555 1234 Mon-Fri 09.00-17.00

Find builders, plumbers, electricians, roofers and firms awarded the TrustMark who comply with government-endorsed standards.

