# Code of Practice:

# Customer Service

October 2026

Leaf Water

# Contents


| | |
|---|---|
| Section 1 | Introduction |
| Section 2 | Who we are |
| Section 3 | Your water supply |
| Section 4 | Your sewerage service |
| Section 5 | Our promises to you |
| Section 6 | How we charge you & paying your bill |
| Section 7 | Water leaks |
| Section 8 | Moving home |
| Section 9 | New connections |
| Section 10 | Making a complaint |
| Section 11 | Independent advice |
| Section 12 | Contacting us |

# Section 1: Introduction

Our Customer Service Code of Practice explains the level of service we aim to provide to you. These are our commitments to our customers and in certain circumstances you will receive a payment if we do not achieve the standards we are aiming for.

This is one of several codes of practice that detail our standards of service. Our codes have been reviewed and agreed by the Office of Water Services (Ofwat) who are the industry regulator and the Consumer Council for Water (CCW) who represent you as customers.

Our website is 'Recite me' enabled and our documents are also available in other formats such as Braille and large print. Please contact us for more information.

# Section 2: Who are we?

We are Leaf Water, the company providing water or sewerage services (or both) in your area. We operate under a license granted by the Secretary of State for the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and are regulated by the Office of Water Services (Ofwat) through powers delegated to them in 2007.

We apply to be the provider of water and sewerage services for specific locations and if successful we are granted a new appointment and variation (NAV) to serve the defined area. In some cases we may only provide one of your water or sewerage services. Your water bill will indicate which of these services we provide to you, or you can call us on 0333 009 5212 for confirmation.

We are owned by Advanced Utility Asset Networks Ltd, a company that owns and operates electrical and water networks in England.

Our regulator, Ofwat, ensures customers are treated fairly and protects customers where the water supply fails to achieve the agreed standards of service.

# Section 3: Your water supply

This section applies to you if we provide water to your property. You can check which services we provide by calling us, using the Water UK postcode checker, or taking a look at your water bill.

**Water Quality**

It is our utmost priority to provide safe, clean drinking water to you. The quality of your water supply is regulated by the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) under the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2016 along with any subsequent amendments to those regulations.

If you are at all concerned with the quality of the water in your taps please contact our team either by phone 0333 009 5212 or e-mail: waterquality@leafwater.co.uk at the earliest opportunity so as we can investigate this.

If your water is discoloured or cloudy this is not necessarily harmful to your health. This can be caused by maintenance work that we have carried out on nearby pipework which has disturbed sediments in the pipes. In some cases, where air is trapped in water mains, your water can appear to be a milky white colour. To resolve any such discoloration, run your tap for a few minutes until it clears.

If you report a problem that we think could affect the wholesomeness of your water we will visit your property within 24 hours and will aim to be there the same day if possible. For other problems we will make an appointment to visit you.

If we take water samples from your property we will normally let you know the initial results within 48hrs and provide a written confirmation of the results within 10 working days, unless you ask us to let you know a different way.

You can find some useful guides regarding common water quality concerns in the water quality section of our website: https://www.leafwater.co.uk/water-supply/water-quality

We are very proud of our drinking water and we publish information about the quality of your water on our website at www.leafwater.co.uk. This information is also available in other formats from our water quality team, who you can e-mail (enquiries@leafwater.co.uk), or contact through our Customer Service team.

If we become aware that your water supply is not fit to drink, we will let you know as quickly as possible. We may issue a 'Restriction of Use' notice explaining, for example, whether your water shouldn't be used, or if it should be boiled. Should this be necessary we will make special arrangements for customers on our Priority Services Scheme. Please see further details of this on our website at: www.leafwater.co.uk/priority-services

**Water Quantity**

We are responsible for managing our network and resources effectively so as to provide you with enough water for normal domestic purposes.

We will try to avoid putting restrictions on your supply such as interruptions due to drought and hosepipe or sprinkler bans. As our water is usually supplied by another water company, they may set restrictions in their region that we have to replicate for our customers.

## Water Pressure

Water pressure at the tap in your home should have a flow of at least 9 litres per minute if the supply serves a single property. We are committed to providing no less than 7 metres head of pressure at the boundary of your property. As a guide, when you measure your water flow at your kitchen tap and you find that it is below 9 litres per minute, please contact us so as we can investigate this further. You will be due a compensation payment if the pressure at the boundary is found to be below 7 metres head and further details of this can be found at: www.leafwater.co.uk/publications

If there is reduced pressure due to leakage, please refer to our separate Leakage Code of Practice.

*Water Hardness*

The hardness of your water depends on where you live. To find out more please visit our website at www.leafwater.co.uk/water-supply/water-quality

## Water Efficiency

We have a number of initiatives in place to ensure the water within our distribution network is used efficiently. We also have a legal responsibility to encourage and help our customers to use water wisely.

Here are some of the things we do to achieve this:

- Proactively tackling leakage on our pipes
- Offering free supply pipe repairs (subject to certain conditions) for all customers
- Encouraging the use of water efficient devices
- Providing consumption data to customers so as you can see how reduced consumption would reduce your water bill
- Promoting the capture and use of rainwater in the garden

## Water Interruptions

Our aim is to provide you with an uninterrupted supply of water. Occasionally we may need to interrupt your supply in order to carry out repairs or improvements to our network. Also, other circumstances, such as severe drought may lead to an interruption.
We will contact you regarding interruptions as follows:

- For any planned work that may interrupt your water supply for more than 4 hours, we will give you at least 48 hours notice
- For any planned work that may interrupt your supply for between one and four hours we will give you at least 12 hours notice
- If we plan to undertake major work in your area we will aim to provide several weeks notice
- We may not be able to provide any notice in the case of an unforeseen incident that interrupts your supply
- If the interruption to your supply lasts longer than 12 hours for whatever reason then we will provide an alternative supply of water, usually in bottles or tankers in the street and we will take all reasonable steps to let you know where these are.

You may be due compensation for the interruption of your supply and the details of this are set out in our guaranteed standards scheme. Please refer to section 5, and also take a look on our website: www.leafwater.co.uk/publications

## Protecting water supplies against contamination

When carrying out plumbing alterations to your home, please be aware that these must meet the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999. These regulations are aimed at preventing misuse, waste, using more water than is needed, incorrectly measuring water and most importantly, preventing drinking water from becoming contaminated. We have a duty to enforce these regulations. We have a 'right of entry', which we can use to inspect premises where we believe the regulations may have been broken. In an emergency, we can enter premises without giving any notice, but in all other cases we would give reasonable notice. For further, independent advice, please contact the Water Regulations Advisory Service (WRAS) at: www.wras.co.uk

**Rights of access**

We have been granted the right to lay or carry out work on pipes in private land (under section 159 of the Water Industry Act 1991). Our Code of Practice for Statutory Pipelaying sets out how we will go about this and is available on our website at: www.leafwater.co.uk/publications. The Code of Practice does not affect our other rights or powers nor those of landowners or occupiers. We will abide by our Code of Practice wherever it is reasonable or practical to do so.

# Section 4: Your sewerage service

This section applies to you if we provide sewerage services to your property. You can check which services we provide by calling us, using the Water UK postcode checker, or taking a look at your water bill.

Our sewerage system collects rainwater and wastewater from your drainage system to take it away for treatment.

**Sewerage Systems**

There are two types of sewerage systems:

- A combined system that takes away both rainwater and wastewater in a single network for treatment before being returned to the environment
- A separated system that takes your rainwater away through a surface water network to a soakaway or local watercourse and then a second network that takes your wastewater away for treatment before being returned to the environment

Our sewerage systems are usually separated.

There are also two types of drainage pipes:

- Drains just serving 1 property
- Public sewers serving more than one property

Both types can, for example, be laid in private land, footpaths, public roads, gardens or open public spaces. Both drains and sewers can be designed as either combined or separate systems and are designed to protect against sewer flooding.

Usually, we are responsible for the public sewers and the drains up to the boundary of your property and you are responsible for the drains within your property boundary. If you are unsure about the responsibility for the drains serving your property please contact our team on: 0333 009 5212 who will be able to help.

If you notice or are experiencing a problem with our sewerage system please call us as soon as you can on: 0345 646 0680.

In the case of private drains and sewers the owners of the drain or sewer, or the occupiers of any property served by the drain or sewer, are responsible for their maintenance.

If you have a problem with a private drain or sewer you should contact a plumber or drainage contractor. Details of approved plumbers are available on the Watersafe website www.watersafe.org.uk

**Sewer Flooding**

There can be a number of reasons why a sewer floods, for example:

- It could be overloaded
- It could be blocked
- It could have collapsed
- A pumping station may have failed

One of the most common causes of sewer flooding is blockages. Blockages are often caused by what is put down them, for example, flushing nappies down the toilet or pouring cooking fats down the sink drain. Please avoid putting anything that isn't biodegradable down your sink, loo or drains. Wet wipes, cotton buds, cosmetic cotton pads, sanitary products and so on, should be put in the bin.

Extreme weather may also cause sewer flooding as we cannot guarantee this will be prevented.

We understand any type of sewer flooding is unwelcome and stressful. If this happens to you, please phone us on 0345

646 0680 as soon as you can, so as we can provide help and advice.

**Clearing up after a blockage or sewer flooding**

If the blockage or sewer flooding was caused by us we offer a free service to clean and disinfect the affected area as soon as possible. Please see our 'Promises to you' section and details of our guaranteed standards of service at: www.leafwater.co.uk/publications

**Damage liability**

Unless we have been negligent in some way, we do not accept liability for damage caused by sewer flooding from a public sewer. You should contact your household insurer immediately if you have a flood.

Leaf Water

# Section 5: Our promises to you

### Guaranteed standards scheme

We have set out the full details of our levels of service in our Guaranteed Standards Scheme which is available on our website at: www.leafwater.co.uk/publications or in alternative formats from our customer contact team (telephone 0333 009 5212).

This scheme provides details of our promises and what we will do if we fail to meet them. It is a combination of standards set by the regulator and standards that we have set for ourselves.

The scheme covers each of the following:

- How and when we will contact you
- How we handle queries and complaints
- What communications we will send you and when
- How we will respond to interruptions to your supply
- What happens in the event of sewer flooding
- How you can pay your bill
- How we will go about recovering debt
- How we handle Water Quality issues
- How we will manage 'Restrictions of Use'

### Priority Services Register

We understand that customers have individual needs and so we have developed a range of services to cater for most situations. If you:

- Are blind or partially sighted
- Are deaf or hard of hearing
- Have disabilities
- Have long term illnesses
- Have a child under the age of five living in the home
- Are in financial difficulties
- Have difficulty communicating

You can register for priority services by contacting our customer service team or filling in the individual needs form on our website at: www.leafwater.co.uk/priority-services

Our priority services will ensure you:

- Are given priority in emergency situations
- Will receive an alternative water supply within 12 hours if your water supply is interrupted
- Will receive documents in a different format such as large print, braille, translated into other languages if requested
- Can nominate another person to manage your water bill on your behalf
- Will be able to set a password for our team so as to protect you from cold callers on your doorstep
- Receive help and support if you are facing financial difficulties

# Section 6: How we charge you & paying your bill

We review our prices every year and you can find details of all our current charges on our website at: www.leafwater.co.uk/publications Alternatively, you can contact our Customer Services team on 0333 009 5212. The tariffs that you pay will depend on the area in which you live. Our charges are capped by our regulator, Ofwat, so you will not pay more for our services than you would have paid if your services had been provided by the regional water company in whose area you live.

**Your water bill**

As your local water company we set your water charges based on our agreement of these with Ofwat. These will then be adjusted in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) – the system used to measure the average price of goods and services.

We will send you a water bill every 6 months and there will be four components to the bill you receive. These are:

- The water you have used (measured through your water meter)
- The sewage you have discharged (this is based on your water use, however, we recognise not all your water returns to the sewer, so we take this into account)
- The water network standing charges (this covers the cost of reading and maintaining your meter and the water supply network)
- The sewerage and surface water network standing charges (the cost of maintaining the drainage system and disposing of any rainwater that falls onto your property)

Full details of who is responsible for paying the water and sewerage charges, along with payment options, are available in our Customer Code of Practice 'Paying your Bill' which is available online at: www.leafwater.co.uk/publications and available in other formats from our customer service team by calling 0333 009 5212.

Here is a summary of the key points from this:

**Who is responsible for the water bill at a property?**

You are usually responsible for the water and sewerage charges (the water bill) if you are:

- The occupier of the property
- The owner of a vacant property

We assume that water bills will be paid by the occupier(s). In the case of property occupied by a number of people all of the responsible adults can be held liable for the water bill.

**Paying your bill**

There are many ways to pay your water bill including:

- Direct debit
- Debit or credit card payment
- Online banking
- Bank transfer
- By WaterDirect
- By post with a cheque

We will usually send you a bill twice a year, or you can receive your bill monthly depending on your payment method. You must then pay the balance within 10 working days of having received the bill.

Payments can be made weekly, fortnightly, monthly or every 6 months. Please call our customer services team (0333 009 5212) to set up your payment method and to agree a suitable schedule.

If you are finding it difficult to pay your water bill there may be ways we can support you.

Please contact us as soon as you can by calling us on 0333 009 5212 or using any of our other 'ways to contact us' (www.leafwater.co.uk/contact-us) if you are struggling financially. We have three ways to help customers:

- Payment Plans
- WaterSure Scheme
- WaterDirect Scheme

If you miss payments we will send reminders and we may progress to using a debt collection agency or taking court action in line with our 'Code of Practice: Paying your bill' which also includes details of the three support schemes. This is available online at: www.leafwater.co.uk/publications

## Your water meter

We aim to read your meter at least once a year. All our meters transmit encrypted consumption data at regular intervals, we will collect this directly or from the street in a vehicle drive-by. If we have been unable to read your meter we will send you an estimated bill based on your average use. If it is safe to do so, you can read your own meter and send us a reading online or let us know by contacting our customer service team.

The meter remains our property and we are responsible for maintaining and replacing it as necessary. It is a criminal offence to tamper with or remove your water meter.

## Where to find your meter

There are three possible locations for your meter:

- Inside your property (usually where the water pipe comes through the floor in your home)
- In the ground just beyond the boundary of your property (in a service strip, footpath or road)
- In the ground inside your property boundary (usually in your garden)

If your meter is below ground in a 'boundary box' there may be water present in the chamber. This does not necessarily mean the meter is faulty as it can just be rainwater. If you are concerned that this may be a leak, please see our guidance in the leakage code of practice (www.leafwater.co.uk/publications) for further information.

If you cannot find your meter, please contact us and we will be able to let you know where it is.

## How to read your meter




Our meters will be in the format shown above. They may also have a hinged cover to keep the screen clean. We only need the numbers before the comma as we bill in whole $m^3$. The numbers after the

comma are fractions of a cubic meter. so please ignore these.

**Can I move my meter?**

If you would like to have your water meter moved to a different location you will need to contact us to discuss this. If we agree that it can be moved we will provide details of how much the work will cost. If we do not agree to your meter being moved we will provide a reason. We will move meters free of charge where this is to enable a customer to be able to read the meter.

**What if I suspect my meter is faulty?**

If you suspect your meter is faulty you can ask us to test it. We will visit your property and test your meter in situ free of charge. If you disagree with the results of our test you can ask us to remove the meter and send it for independent testing.

We will not charge for independent testing if the meter is found to be faulty. If the test confirms that the meter complies with the limits of error set in the Measuring Equipment (Cold-water Meters) Regulations 1988, you will be liable for the cost of the test, including replacement of the meter, postage and packaging and other admin costs, up to a maximum of £90.

If your meter is over recording we will adjust your previous charges to reflect the correct level of use either from the date it became faulty (if this is known) or for 6 months before the date of the last reading we took. If the meter is under recording then we will not adjust your bill, but we will replace the meter permanently. We will provide you with a copy of the meter test report as soon as it becomes available.

# Section 7: Water leaks

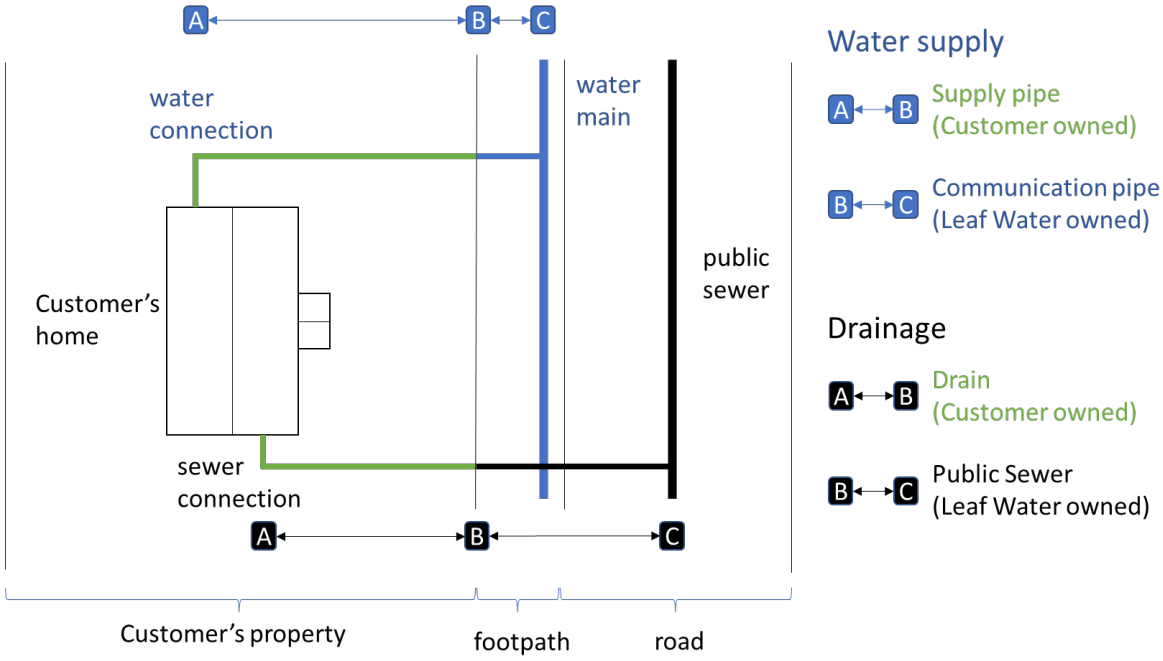
We will do all we can to help you find and repair leaks on your supply pipe if it is accessible and not under a building.

We will repair or replace a leaking supply pipe to an individual property as many times as is needed in these circumstances.

Our Customer Code of Practice: Leakage sets out full details of our leakage policy and is available at www.leafwater.co.uk/publications on our website, or call our customer service team (0333 009 5212) if you would like this document in other formats. The key points from the Code of Practice are:

### Responsibilities for pipes

The diagram below represents a typical single dwelling and confirms who is responsible for which pipes. If you are at all unsure of your responsibilities in relation to your property please contact our customer services team (0333 009 5212) who will be able to advise you.




### How to spot a leak

There are some indicators to look out for that may mean you have a leak.

If you have:

- Higher water meter readings than you usually do for a regular period of time;
- A reduction in water pressure compared to previously
- Areas in your garden where plants or grass continue to grow during dry periods of weather
- Damp patches in or around your property
- The sound of running water in your home when none is being used

Then it is worth investigating for a leak. In the first instance, please check all taps are turned off and no appliances are using water. Take a meter reading and watch the dial to see if it moves or check again in an hour. If the dials are moving or the second reading is higher and no water has been consumed in the meantime, you may have a leak.

Our smart meters may highlight a potential leak and we will contact you if this is the case.

**Leakage from our pipes**

We are responsible for maintaining any communication pipe outside the boundary of your property, the water meter and the stop cock.

Once we are aware of a leak on our pipes we will aim to carry out the repair as soon as possible. This is sometimes dependent on gaining the approval of any relevant authorities.

Reducing leakage on our pipes helps keep your water charges down, so please do call us on 0345 646 0680 or contact us through our website www.leafwater.co.uk/report-a-problem to report any leaks including those outside of your property boundary.

**Leakage from your pipes**

As the home owner you are responsible for maintaining all your internal pipework, including any outside taps, along with your supply pipe from your home to the boundary of the property (A to B on the diagram). If you wish to clarify the responsibilities at your property please contact us. If you are a tenant then we recommend alerting your landlord and us of the possibility of a leak

In the case of a new build property you may be advised to contact the builder in the first instance as work to the supply pipe is usually covered under the builder's guarantee for the first few years.

You should look after your supply pipe as you would the internal plumbing of your home, even if it runs underground. Any work that needs to be done to your supply pipe is legally your responsibility. We will help you find and repair leaks on your supply pipe, for us to do this your supply pipe must be accessible and not under any structure from the boundary up to the entry point into your home. There is no limit to the number of times we will investigate and either repair or replace your supply pipe due to a leak.

It is our duty under law to prevent water wastage caused by leaks on our network and if you do not repair a leak within 14 days we may start proceedings against you under section 75 of the Water Industry Act.

**Repairing a leak**

We offer a free leak detection service during normal working hours and we will do all we can to help you find the leak or the source of the problem.

If a leak is found on your supply pipe within the boundary of your property this is your responsibility, however, we will repair or replace this free of charge if it is accessible and does not pass under any structure. When reinstating the ground directly affected by any repair or replacement of your supply pipe the area will be made good to the best of the abilities of Leaf Water or our contractors with suitable permanent reinstatement but it is not guaranteed that a like for like reinstatement will be possible.

We will aim to either make a repair or replace the pipe within 7 days with a target of taking no more than 21 days.

If a leak is found to be on our network outside of your property boundary this is our responsibility and we will aim to carry out the repair as soon as possible. This is

sometimes dependent on gaining the approval of any relevant authorities.

If a leak is found to be on the internal plumbing of your property, including external taps this is your responsibility and we recommend you contact a plumber.

# Section 8: Moving home

We aim to provide a smooth transition for both new and departing customers.

**Moving out of a property**

Please contact us as soon as possible if you are moving home. We require at least 5 working days' notice by telephone or 10 working days' notice by letter to produce a final bill. If you are moving out and wish to finalise your water bill you can either provide us with a meter reading, allow us to estimate your meter reading based on previous consumption, use a smart meter reading, or we will take a meter reading for you. If you would like us to take a final meter reading on the day that move out you must give us at least 2 working days' notice by calling us, sending us an email or by giving us notice to that effect when you notify us about moving home.

If you fail to provide an accurate meter read and you do not notify us that we take a closing read, you will remain liable for all charges until the first to occur of:

- 28 days after we find out you are no longer at the premises
- The new occupier informs us that they have moved in and are now responsible for paying water/sewerage charges
- The date the meter is normally read.

Once we've got all the information we need, we'll send you your final bill within 6 working days. If there's a credit on your account we'll either transfer your credit to your new account, or process a refund within 5 to 15 days, depending on the amount we owe you and the way you made your payments.

Please remember that if we only provide one of your water services you will also need to tell the other provider that you are moving home. You can ask our Customer Service team if you need the details of another provider.

Should you require a water or sewerage supply to be disconnected, you must give us 14 working days' notice.

**Moving into a property**

If you are moving into a property in our supply area then please contact us as soon as you can to set up an account and provide a meter reading. You can reach our customer service team on 0333 009 5212 or for other options check our contact us page on the website: www.leafwater.co.uk/contact-us You can also register through our customer portal (myaccount.leafwater.co.uk).

If you do not provide us with a meter reading we will assume the final reading for our departing customer is the opening reading for your account.

# Section 9: New connections

If you require a new water, connection, sewer connection, water main or mains sewer please call our customer service team on 0333 009 5212 to discuss your requirements and to get an application form. A brief outline of the process for each is set-out below.

### New Water Connection

We must connect all new domestic properties to our water mains, if you ask us to. All new connections will have a meter and be charged according to the tariffs in our charges scheme (www.leafwater.co.uk/publications)

You will have to pay the cost of any new connection to the main. These costs include:

- making the connection and any necessary inspections
- laying our part of the service pipe and installing the stop valve and meter
- a fixed payment towards our overall costs of making sure that our water supply system can cope with the extra load of making more water supplies available. This is called the infrastructure charge.

Once you have completed the application form on our website, we will visit the site as soon as possible and send you a quote. The quote will also include information about what you will need to do before we will make the connection.

This will usually include:

- having the necessary permission from landowners
- installing your supply and plumbing to the Water Supply and Fittings Regulations 1999
- laying your part of the service pipe to our specification
- providing a separate service pipe to each part of a building that is separately occupied

Once all the above is in place, we will then aim to connect your property to our main within 14 days.

When we connect a new property to the main, we will fit a water meter and you will be charged for this.

### New Sewer Connection

You can connect your drain or sewer to our sewers, as long as it is practical to do so and you pay all the costs.

Our sewerage network does not serve all properties so please contact us to check whether we provide sewer services in your area.

You will need to give us details of the drain or sewer to be connected and how the connection will be made. We can refuse permission to connect a drain or sewer if we think the new connection will interfere with existing sewers. For example, we will not allow a foul drain connection to a surface water sewer. If you do not agree with all of our requirements, CCW (the voice for water consumers) can help settle any disputes.

You can either ask us to do the work and we will give you a quote, or you can make your own arrangements. If you or your contractor makes the connection, you will need permission from your local highway authority for any work that needs to be carried out in the street.

For the new connection, you will need to pay us:

- a charge to inspect the work if you or your contractor makes the connection,

or the amount of our quote if we make the connection for you
- a fixed payment towards the costs of making sure the overall wastewater treatment system can cope with the extra load. This is called the infrastructure charge.

If we agree to your connection, and once you have paid the charges, you must give us 14 days notice of the day you or your builder will do the work. Then we can arrange to inspect the connection to make sure it meets our standards.

**New Main and Sewer**

If you ask for a new main we'll provide it, but you and anyone else who applies must pay the difference between the income we receive from charging for water we supply for domestic purposes from the main and our reasonable costs in providing the main.

We may also need a payment from you before starting the work. We will give you a quote for this payment and we must provide the main within three months of you signing the agreement for us to do so.

We may not have a suitable existing sewer for you to connect your property to, or we may need access across private land. In these circumstances you can ask us to provide a suitable sewer for you to connect to and, if practical, we'll do so. If a new sewer is needed, we aim to install it within six months (or longer if agreed with you).

We may also need some security, in the form of a payment, from you before starting the work. We will provide you with the quote for this payment, which will include details on how you can pay.

**Self Lay Connection**

In line with section 51A of the Water Industry Act 1991, we allow developers to lay water mains and services, as long as the work is done to the same standard as that done by us or our contractors.

The work must be carried out by a company that is accredited with the Water Industry Registration Scheme (WIRS) administered by LRQA. You can look at the list of WIRS-accredited companies on the LRQA website at www.lrqa.com

The specification for laying self-lay water mains and services is defined in the Water UK Water Sector Guidance (WSG) Water Sector Guidance – approved documents | Water UK.

You can find Ofwat guidance on how new water mains contributions and self-lay asset payments are calculated in the periodic review 24 guidance at www.ofwat.gov.uk.

You can get more details by calling our customer services team or visiting our website.

## Building work near public sewers

If you are building over or close to our sewer pipes, we will need to know so that we can help to protect them.

Building close to or over a public sewer without getting our formal approval is illegal and it may also put the future sale of your property at risk. We're responsible for public sewers within our area and many public sewers which cross private land. We must make sure that any building work does not damage a public sewer, cause a risk of flooding or restrict our access for maintenance.

Wherever possible we prefer to avoid the need to build over or close to a sewer by repositioning the proposed development or diverting the sewer. 'Close to' is normally defined as being within three metres of the sewer. However, if the risk to the public sewer is small and we cannot divert the sewer, we may allow building over or close to a sewer.

Please contact us on 0333 009 5212 if you are considering any building work, so that we can check whether the proposed work affects the public sewer.

# Section 10: Making a complaint

Whilst we aim to provide great customer service we recognise that sometimes things go wrong. If you are experiencing a problem or are unhappy with our service it is very important to us that your concerns are dealt with quickly, efficiently and to your satisfaction.

**What is a complaint?**

We consider any communication from a customer or potential customer in which dissatisfaction is expressed regarding any aspect of our service, a process, or a member of our team (employee or contractor) to be a complaint. This definition is intended to be broad and all encompassing.

**How we will handle your complaint**

We will investigate your complaint thoroughly in order to establish:

- How your complaint occurred
- What is required to resolve your complaint and also stop it recurring
- Whether we have failed against our own standards of service and, therefore, whether a payment is due to you under the standards scheme.

We will respond to your complaint via your preferred communication method and we will provide full details of the outcome of our investigation and this will include:

- An apology where it is appropriate
- Clarification of what went wrong
- An explanation of how we propose to make things right
- Information on how to escalate your complaint if you remain unhappy

**Our procedure**

Our complaints resolution procedure has 4 stages as follows:

*Stage 1: Initial complaint*

Please contact our customer service team at the earliest opportunity and we will try and resolve the issue there and then. If the complaint is complex we may take a little longer to propose an outcome, however, we will keep you informed on our progress. We will assume you would like us to formally respond to your complaint unless you tell us you are now satisfied and this is not needed.

*Stage 2: Escalation*

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of our initial investigation we will escalate your complaint to a senior manager or director to take a fresh look at the complaint.

*Stage 3: Independent advice*

Should you remain unhappy with the outcome from stage 2 you can take your complaint to the Consumer Council for Water (CCW) who are the independent voice for water consumers and who will work on your behalf to resolve the complaint with us. CCW contact details can be found in section 11 below 'Independent Advice'.

*Stage 4: Alternative dispute resolution*

If, following CCW's initial review of your case, you remain dissatisfied with the outcome you may have the right to refer your case for mediation and final adjudication by CCW and independent support from the Dispute Resolution Ombudsman (DRO). We will abide by any decision made by CCW and the DRO.

CCW contact details can be found in section 11, 'Independent Advice'.

**Our response times**

We will always aim to respond to complaints within 10 working days. If we fail to meet this timescale we will credit your water services account with a payment in accordance with our Guaranteed Standards Scheme (GSS). If we fail to credit your account with 10 working days you will be entitled to an additional penalty payment and this will be credited to your account.

# Section 11: Independent advice

There are a number of bodies who can provide further information and independent advice if you need it. Here is how you contact them:

**Department for Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra)**

You can contact Defra as follows:

By writing to:

Defra
Customer Contact Unit
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London
SW1P3JR

Or calling them on: 03459 33 55 77
Their website is: www.defra.gov.uk

**Ofwat**

The Office of Water Services (Ofwat) is the water industry regulator is based at the following address:

Case Management Office
Centre City Tower
7 Hill Street
Birmingham
B5 4UA

Further contact details are available on their website (www.ofwat.gov.uk) along with details of their role.

**Consumer Council for Water (CCW)**

You can contact CCW as follows:

By writing to:

CCW
23 Stephenson Street
Birmingham
B2 4BH

Or calling them on: 0300 034 2222

Their website is: www.ccwater.org.uk

**Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI)**

You can contact DWI as follows:

By writing to them at:

Drinking Water Inspectorate
9 Millbank
c/o Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London
SW1P3JR

Or calling them on: 0330 041 6501

Or e-mail: dwi.enquiries@defra.gov.uk

Their website is: www.dwi.gov.uk for further details of their role

**Environment Agency (EA)**

You can contact the EA as follows:

By writing to:

Environment Agency
Rio House
Waterside Drive
Aztec West
Almondsbury
Bristol
BS32 4UD

Or calling them on the following numbers:

- General Enquiries: 03708 506 506
- Floodline: 0345 988 1188
- Incident Hotline: 0800 807 060

Their website is:
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency

And e-mail is: enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

## Further Dispute Resolution Information

*Dispute Resolution Ombudsman (DRO)*

If you remain dissatisfied following CCW's efforts to resolve your complaint, you have the right to refer your complaint to the Dispute Resolution Ombudsman.

The DRO is an independent, not-for-profit, and government-approved service that has been appointed by CCW. It has provided a range of services to its registered business and their customers for more than 30 years. The DRO is designed to provide an independent, impartial and easy to use alternative to going to court or tribunal.

We continue to align our approach with the requirements:

- To provide DRO assistance free of charge to customers;
- To support the principles set out in the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Specification
- To respect the independence of the DRO
- To be bound by the decision of the DRO's adjudicator if accepted by the customer and to implement the decision as required by the scheme rules
- To co-operate with and have due regard to the recommendations of the ADR panel
- To provide accurate and reliable information to, and co-operate with, the DRO adjudicators

You can make an application, free of charge, via the DRO website: www.disputeresolutionombudsman.org or you can ask for more information from your CCW advisor. Guidance is available on the DRO website.

You can contact the DRO as follows:

By writing to:

Dispute Resolution Ombudsman
Premier House
First Floor
1-5 Argyle Way
Stevenage
SG1 2AD

Or calling them on: 0333 241 3209
E-mailing them on:
info@disputeresolutionombudsman.org
Looking on their website:
www.disputeresolutionombudsman.org

*Arbitration*

Under the Water Industry Act 1991, some disputes can be referred for arbitration. We'll have to agree who will be the arbitrator, but if we can't agree, the President of the Institution of Civil Engineers, the Secretary of State for the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) or Ofwat can appoint an arbitrator.
For further details or advice on arbitration you can find the following websites for Chartered Institute of Arbitration useful ciarb.org or alternatively adviceguide.org.uk.
Those disputes, which can be referred to arbitration, are:

- Prevention of contamination – Any dispute about the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999, which is designed to prevent contamination of the water supply, can be referred to arbitration
- Water meters – Any dispute about the location of a water meter, which we require to be installed in your property
- Street works – any dispute under Schedule 12 of the Water Industry Act 1991 about compensation in respect of street works powers.

This means an independent person will be appointed and will make a decision on the dispute .

*Legal action*

The Water Industry Act also gives you the right, in certain circumstances, to take legal proceedings against us for any loss or damage caused to you by our failure to comply with our duties under the Act.

We recommend you discuss this with a solicitor in the first instance. If you would like to know more about your rights you can contact us, CCW or any of the other organisations identified earlier.

# Section 12: Contacting us

**You can contact Leaf Water as follows:**

By writing to:

Leaf Water
Nexus Park
Avenue East, Skyline 120
Great Notley
Braintree, Essex
CM77 7AL

Or calling us on: 0333 009 5212
e-mailing us on: enquiries@leafwater.co.uk
looking at our website: www.leafwater.co.uk

**Our Office hours are:**

**General Queries & Billing:**
Monday to Friday: 8.30am to 5.30pm

**Water or Drainage Emergencies:**
Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on 0345 646 0680.

You can also access your account by registering on our customer portal (myaccount.leafwater.co.uk) and where you can manage a number of aspects of your account including:

- Viewing your water bill
- Paying your water bill
- Submitting a water meter reading
- Registering for priority services

