



## **Charges Scheme 2017/18**

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Please note that our miscellaneous charges and developer services charges can be found in a separate document entitled 'Miscellaneous Water Charges and Developer Services Charges': <http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk/publications.asp>

# 1. Introduction

This Charges Scheme sets out our charges for water services and also those we collect on behalf of Severn Trent Water Ltd for sewerage services. All charges are effective from 1 April 2017, unless otherwise stated. Please visit our website at [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk) for information on the following areas:

- Your charges explained
- What you should do if you have moved into a property within our supply area
- Arrangements to pay your water services bill

Alternatively you can call 0345 60 70 456 or write to:

South Staffs Water PLC  
Green Lane  
Walsall WS2 7PD

If you are a non-household customer and eligible to choose your water and sewerage retail service provider this Charges Scheme is not applicable to you. To learn more, speak to us or visit [www.open-water.org.uk](http://www.open-water.org.uk)

## Our charging policy

Our powers to charge for water supplies are contained in the relevant parts of the Water Industry Act (WIA) 1991, as amended by the WIA 1999, the Water Act 2003 and the Water Act 2014. We operate under an Instrument of Appointment issued by the Secretary of State for the Environment in August 1989.

This Charges Scheme is made by South Staffs Water Plc under Section 143 of the WIA 1991, until amended by subsequent resolution of the company.

This Charges Scheme provides for charges in respect of the services performed, facilities provided and rights made available by us, in exercise of our water supply functions under Section 37 of the WIA 1991 other than the supply of water in bulk.

This Scheme shall come into effect on 1 April 2017 and remain in force until revoked, amended or modified by us. Consequently, our 2016/17 Charges Scheme is hereby revoked with effect from this Charges Scheme coming into operation.

## About South Staffs Water Plc

South Staffs Water provides clean drinking water to a population of 1.32 million customers through a network of 6,000km of mains. Almost half of our water is sourced from boreholes in the ground and the remainder from two major treatment works, one of which takes water from the River Severn. We currently have excellent service standards, have very efficient operations and our bills to customers are among the lowest in the country. Our area of supply incorporates the Black Country conurbation and stretches to Burton and Uttoxeter. We do not supply sewerage services; our customers receive these from Severn Trent Water Ltd. However, we bill for these on behalf of Severn Trent Water Ltd.

We have a strong set of values that recognise our influence on the environment and on the daily lives of everyone in the community from customers to our employees. Our Vision is to consistently deliver high quality water at great value with excellent service to our customers, communities, employees and wider stakeholders.

How we perform as a business is important not only to our customers, but also our regulators, our owners and our external stakeholders.

From 2015 onwards, we are measuring our performance against 15 different outcome delivery incentives (ODIs). The ODIs cover all aspects of our operations and have been split into five main outcomes:

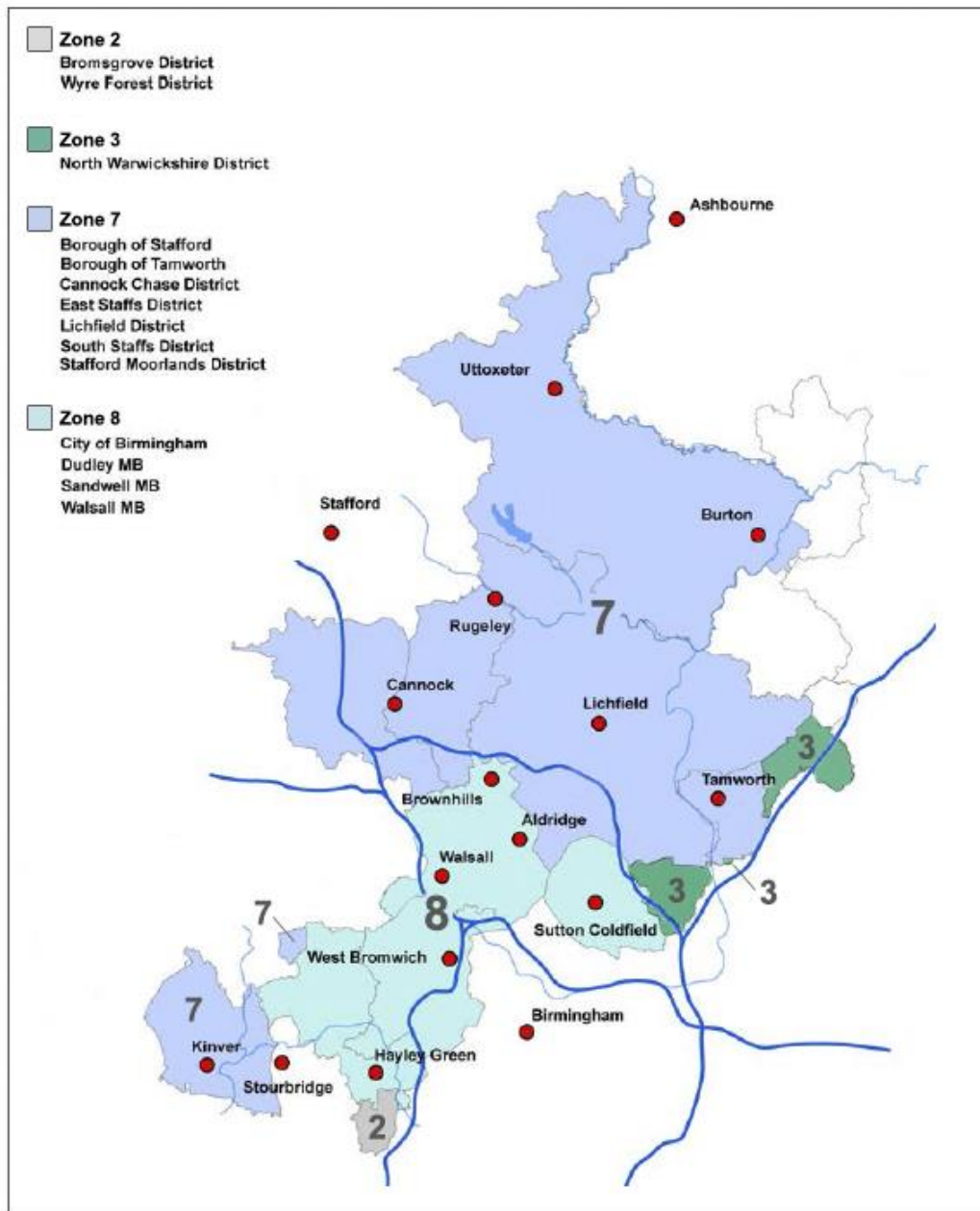


Further details of the ODIs and the performance measures that sit underneath them can be found on our website at [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk)

## South Staffs Water area of supply

Below is our area of supply. We act as an agent on behalf of Severn Trent Water Ltd and are responsible for the collection of sewerage charges within our area.

Severn Trent Water's charging zones are detailed in the map below. For full details of sewerage charges, see the Statement of Charges publications by Severn Trent Water Ltd at. Sewerage charges are collected in accordance with Severn Trent Water's Charges Scheme.



## General

In this charges scheme: “The Company”, “we”, “us” and “our” means South Staffs Water Plc.

“Ofwat” means the Water Services Regulation Authority – the industry regulator.

“CCWater” means the Consumer Council for Water, an independent consumer organisation.

“The 1991 Act” and “WIA91” means the Water Industry Act 1991. “The 1999 Act” and “WIA99” means the Water Industry Act 1999.

“The 2003 Act” means the Water Act 2003. “The

2014 Act” means the Water Act 2014.

“The Licence” means the Company’s Instrument of the Appointment as a water undertaker for the area described.

“Unmetered water supply” means a supply of water that is not a metered supply of water.

“Metered water supply” means a supply of water on which a meter has been installed.

“Meter” irrespective of who installs the meter, it remains, or becomes, the property of South Staffs Water.

“Rateable value” (RV) means the value applicable to the property as at 31 March 1990, after any subsequent amendments in the Valuation List provided by the District Valuer of the Inland Revenue.

“Household premises” means properties that are used as domestic dwellings receiving water for domestic purposes that are not factories, offices or commercial premises.

“Non-household premises” means any properties receiving water, which may include water for domestic purposes but which are not occupied as domestic premises.

“Domestic purposes” means drinking, washing, cooking, central heating and sanitary purposes for which water may be supplied. See Section 218 of the 1991 Act.

“Common billing agreement” means an agreement between the Company and any other person under which that person has undertaken to pay water and sewerage charges in respect of two or more properties which have a common supply pipe.

## Legislation

The application, assessment and recovery of charges under this Scheme are subject to the provisions of relevant Acts of Parliament, regulations and directions made thereunder. Attention is drawn to various Codes of Practice under which we operate, especially:

- Code of Practice for Leakage (Household Customers)
- Code of Practice for Household Customers
- Code of Practice for Household Customer Debt

Copies of these Codes are available on our website at [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk)

Alternatively, please contact us on 0345 60 70 456.

If in this Charges Scheme where there are any inconsistencies or variances with the powers and duties of Ofwat, or any omissions of Ofwat's powers and duties, then Ofwat's powers and duties shall be deemed to be incorporated herein as though they were set out in full and shall prevail over the Charges Scheme in so far as they are inconsistent.

## Use of customer data

Any personal information you provide to us will be processed in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 for the purposes for which it was provided or as permitted by law. In particular, we may:

- Where customers have phoned us, provide their contact details to a customer survey company employed by Ofwat for the purpose of assessing our level of customer service (as measured by the Service Incentive Mechanism)
- Disclose your personal information to other companies in the South Staffordshire Plc group, its affiliated partners, sub-contractors and selected third parties detailed in this document, where required to provide a product or service you have requested, or
- Share your personal information with Credit Reference Agencies and Fraud Prevention Agencies (CRAs and FPAs) in order to verify your identity for the purposes of fraud prevention and to assist us in managing your account and providing services to you
- For more information on the way in which your personal information will be shared with CRAs and FPAs, please refer to our website at [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk)



## Refund or recovery of charges

Where we are acting as an agent for Severn Trent Water in relation to the recovery or refund of monies due to Severn Trent Water, its current charges scheme shall apply.

### Backdating of unbilled charges

Where we discover the customer has not been billed for all, or part, of their water supply, it is our policy to levy backdated charges, unless there is clear evidence of failure or error by the company.

**Household customers** - In all cases where charges have not previously been levied in full, charges for household customers will be levied in accordance with the Limitation Act 1980 (i.e. charges will be levied back up to six years from the date of discovery of the error), unless a shorter period of time is agreed by the Company.

For metered household customers, back billing will include a volume charge as well as standing charges. Where no meter was in place or no readings for billing purposes were obtained, a bill will be calculated using the average daily consumption figure, unless the customer provides evidence substantiating a different figure.

For unmetered household customers, back billing will include the rateable value charge.

If, as a result of a meter registering outside of the prescribed limits of accuracy, the customer has not been billed or has been under-billed we will levy charges in accordance with The Water (Meters) Regulations 1988.

### Refund of charges

Where there is clear evidence of a failure or error by the Company in the customer's favour an adjustment will be made to the customer's account. Should any refund be due this will be limited to a maximum of six years, not including the current charging year. This period of six years is consistent with The Limitations Act 1980.

## 2. Household charges

Household customers are charged by one of the following three methods:

- Unmetered – based on the rateable value (RV) of the property
- Metered – based on the metered standing charges and the volumetric consumption charge, registered through a water meter
- Assessed charge – based on an average usage for certain property types

We also collect sewerage and surface water drainage charges on behalf of Severn Trent Water Ltd. These will also be based on the method on which you are charged for your water supply, i.e. metered or unmetered.

### Unmetered charges

The unmetered charges are for:

- Water supply
- Sewage disposal service
- Surface water drainage service

### Water supply charges

The charge is calculated by multiplying the rate in poundage by the RV of the property as fixed on 31 March 1990. This is not the same as the council tax band, and cannot be changed. The RV of a customer's property is detailed on their bill.

South Staffs Water Supply £0.7357 per £/RV
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Water charges of £0.7357 per £/RV are subject to a minimum charge of £71.93 per annum (pa). There is no standing charge for unmetered charges.

Miscellaneous Unmetered Water Charges	
Household swimming pools - less than 10,000 litres capacity	£81.70 pa

### Sewerage charges

Severn Trent Water			
Charging zones (refer to page 6 for details)	Sewerage and surface water charges (£/RV)	Surface water only charge (£/RV)	Sewerage only charge (£/RV)
2	0.9232	0.3061	0.6498
3	0.9720	0.3234	0.6831
6	1.1884	0.3892	0.8416
7	1.1584	0.3798	0.8198
8	0.9655	0.3234	0.6764

## Surface water drainage

For most customers, the rain that falls onto the roof, yard and other parts of their property drains into the sewers. However, there are some properties where water does not drain to the sewer, for example if it drains into a septic tank or soakaway, and so customers may be able to get a reduction in their charges. More information is available in the leaflet 'Surface Water Drainage'. To obtain a copy visit our website at: [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk) or call 0345 60 70 456.

## Metered charges

All houses built since 1 April 1990 have a water meter. Some customers have opted to have a water meter fitted and meters may have been fitted in some circumstances, as detailed in our Metering Policy, see page 36. If you have a meter, your charge is based on the water registered through the meter. Sewerage charges are also based on the water registered through the meter. For most customers, it is assumed that 'water in' equals 'water out'.

The charges for a metered water and sewerage service to any premises comprise of:

- A standing charge that varies with the size of your supply pipe and covers the extra costs not incurred with an unmetered water supply. These costs include reading, maintaining and replacing defective meters
- A consumption charge calculated by multiplying the volume of water supplied by the rate per cubic metre

Size of meter (mm)	South Staffs Water		Severn Trent Water	
	Water supply £ per cubic metre (m <sup>3</sup> )	Water standing charge (£/pa)	Sewerage volumetric charge £ per cubic metre (m <sup>3</sup> ) up to 50,000 m <sup>3</sup>	Sewerage standing charge (£/pa)
15	1.0013	43.00	0.9477	12.94
20	1.0013	107.66	0.9477	12.94
25	1.0013	152.98	0.9477	12.94
35	1.0013	204.40	0.9477	12.94
40	1.0013	318.98	0.9477	12.94
50	1.0013	373.65	0.9477	12.94
80	1.0013	492.82	0.9477	12.94

- A surface water drainage charge. The vast majority of metered customers pay for surface water drainage based on the type of property they occupy. These are shown in the table below:

Severn Trent Water	
Category	Surface Water (full) £/pa
1. Flat / terrace	32.95
2. Semi-detached	54.71
3. Detached	76.24

- However, some metered customers pay for their surface water drainage based on the RV of their property, where one exists. The charges for this are shown in the table below:

Severn Trent Water	
Charging zones (refer to page 6 for details)	Surface water only charge (£/RV)
2	0.3061
3	0.3234
6	0.3892
7	0.3798
8	0.3234

- It is possible to change this to the property-type charge shown above. Please contact 0345 60 70 456 for details.
- If you elect to change, the charge will be applied from the date of the request and will be included in your normal metered water bill. You will then receive bills in accordance with metered water.

## Surface water drainage

For most customers, the rain that falls onto the roof, yard and other parts of their property drains into the sewers. However, there are some properties where water does not drain to the sewer, for example if it drains into a septic tank or soakaway, and so you may be able to get a reduction in your charges. More information is available in the leaflet 'Surface Water Drainage'. To obtain a copy visit our website at: [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk) or contact 0345 60 70 456.

## Assessed charges

An assessed charge can be applied in two situations:

- For unmetered household premises that do not have a rateable value at 31 March 1990 and where a meter cannot be installed
- For unmetered household premises where the occupier requests a meter, but cannot be metered – for example because it is too costly or technically difficult to fit a meter

In both cases, the assessed charge will be based on an estimated average use for the type of property the occupier lives in – for example, detached, semi-detached, flat/terrace.

If a person is the sole occupier of a property, they may be entitled to a single person assessed charge. Proof of single occupancy, for example a council tax bill showing single person discount, will be required before a customer can be considered eligible for the tariff. We will require an annual renewal notice showing single occupier status for this discount to continue.

If there is a change of occupancy at the property, the customer will be required to let us know in advance. Upon notification, the property will then revert to the original property-type based charge until either the circumstances change or a new occupier makes a successful application for single person status. Fraudulent claims will also result in the property reverting to the original property-type based charge.

In instances where a customer requests a meter but cannot have one fitted, the assessed charge will apply from the date of the meter installation survey.

Category	South Staffs Water	Severn Trent Water	
	Assessed charge water (£/pa)	Assessed charge sewerage (£/pa)	Assessed charge surface water drainage (£/pa)
Flat / terrace	135.63	110.85	32.95
Semi-detached	189.51	118.45	54.71
Detached	239.93	141.2	76.24
Single person	95.81	59.74	Applicable property type charge as detailed above

An assessed charge will not be offered in cases where a meter can be fitted at reasonable cost. If the customer requests an alternative meter location but will not pay the additional costs associated with fitting in the alternative location, the customer will remain on an unmetered charge.

Where the RV charge is less than the assessed charge, the RV charge will continue to be applied. Where a customer moves into a property and the previous occupier was charged the assessed charge, the new occupier's water charges will continue to be based on the assessed charge. The new occupier cannot choose to have their charges based upon RV. If any modification has been made to the pipework since the previous survey that means it may be possible to fit a meter, at the customer's request we will carry out another survey.

## A tariff for vulnerable customers (WaterSure)

WaterSure is a scheme intended to help household customers with a water meter that have low incomes and use higher than average amounts of water due to a large family or medical conditions.

You can apply, on an annual basis, for the WaterSure scheme if you or any other person living with you in the premises ("the qualifying person") satisfies the criteria and conditions of eligibility set out below.

Our scheme allows eligible household customers' charges to be capped. Your bills will be pro-rata to the actual number of days in the billing period.

The WaterSure tariff is equivalent to the average household water and sewerage bills in 2017/18.

	South Staffs Water	Severn Trent Water
Tariff type	Water charge (£/pa)	Sewerage charge (£/pa)
WaterSure tariff rate	144.41	166.48

If you are eligible your entitlement will begin at the start of the billing period in which you successfully apply. Metered charges will apply up to that date. Where you are no longer eligible, your period of entitlement ends at the end of the billing period in which this occurs.

The Water Industry (Charges) (Vulnerable Groups) Regulations 1999 (as amended) defines the eligibility criteria as follows:

(a) The qualifying person receives any of the following benefits or tax credits:

- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- Income-based Job Seeker's Allowance
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit (you must be receiving more than the family element)
- Pension Credit
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Universal Credit – the impact of the introduction of Universal Credit:  
When appropriate, this document will be amended to reflect the impact of Universal Credit on the eligibility criteria for the WaterSure tariff

and either:

(b) The qualifying person receives child benefit for three or more children under the age of 19 who live in the premises; or

(c) The qualifying person is diagnosed as suffering from any of the following medical conditions:

- Desquamation (flaky skin loss)
- Weeping skin disease (eczema, psoriasis, varicose ulceration)
- Incontinence
- Abdominal stoma
- Renal failure requiring dialysis at home (customers with renal failure requiring dialysis at home who already receive financial assistance towards water charges from the health authority are not eligible for the WaterSure scheme)
- Crohn's disease
- Ulcerative colitis
- Or any other medical condition for which a qualified medical practitioner has provided a certificate or written evidence confirming the requirement for additional water use, and as a result of that condition uses a significant additional amount of water

In addition you must also satisfy the following conditions:

(i) The qualifying person occupies the whole or part of the premises as their only main house

(ii) In the case of a premises which are not used solely as a person's house, the other use is not the main use of the premises

(iii) Water supplied to the premises is not used for:

- Watering a garden (other than by hand) by means of any apparatus; or
- Automatically replenishing a pond or swimming pool with a capacity of greater than 10,000 litres; and

(iv) The qualifying person has applied for assistance and established their eligibility to it

If you answer yes to all three of the following questions it may be worthwhile you completing the application form:

1. Are you on a water meter?
2. Are you receiving benefit or tax credits as listed above (a)?
3. Either:
  - (a) Does anyone in your household have any of the medical conditions listed above (c) that means they have to use extra water?Or
  - (b) Do you receive child benefit for three or more children under the age of 19?

To apply for the scheme, you must use our application form and provide evidence of eligibility. Application forms are available from us by calling 0345 60 70 456 or by visiting our website at [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk)

Applications may be declined if documentation to support your application is not supplied to us. If your application claims:

- You have three or more children under the age of 19, we will need to see:
  - Latest notice of entitlement to qualifying benefit or tax credit
  - A copy of a recent bank statement (which must be less than three months old) which shows your current entitlement to child benefit and the payment you receive
- You have a listed medical condition, we will need to see:
  - Details of the listed medical condition and how it requires the patient to use a significant quantity of water
  - The name and address of the medical practitioner
  - Your latest notice of entitlement to qualifying benefit or tax credit
- A non-listed medical condition:
  - A certificate provided by a registered general medical practitioner containing the following information:
    - Confirmation of the condition and how it requires the patient to use a significant quantity of water
    - The patient's name and address
    - The date the certificate is given
    - The name and address of the medical practitioner
  - Latest notice of entitlement to qualifying benefit or tax credit
  - The latest notice of entitlement in the case of:
    - (a) Benefit must be dated no more than 12 months before the date of the application; or
    - (b) Tax Credit must be dated no more than six months before the date of the application

We may check the validity of your claim with relevant third parties in relation to the benefit or tax credit you receive.

You are responsible for advising us of any change in circumstances that may affect your eligibility.

If you wish to remain in the WaterSure scheme you must apply to renew your claim. We will remind you of the need to re-apply at the due time.

If you are no longer eligible, or fail to renew your application by the end of the following billing period, your charges will revert to our standard metered tariff.

### 3. Billing and payment frequencies

Charges are normally payable by the occupier of the property receiving the supply or any other persons the supply is available to, except where:

- The owner of the property who is not the occupier is liable by or under any statutory enactment
- By agreement of any person who has agreed to pay the charges
- By agreement with us

Where a tenancy is for a period less than 12 months the owner may be liable to pay the water service charges. Where we are unaware of any tenants, we shall continue to bill the owner as the occupier until such time as details of the tenancy are evidenced to us. Where tenant information is provided after the date of first occupation, by omission of the tenant or landlord, the owner shall remain liable for the charges incurred up to the date of notification. Billing and payment times will vary dependent upon whether you are a metered or an unmetered household customer.

#### Unmetered bills

Bills for unmetered water charges will be sent annually during February or March. Payment is due in advance for the whole year on 1 April. If your bill is sent out later than March, payment will be due on the date shown on your bill. You can view your bill electronically on our website. Visit [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk) to register for My Account. All references to payment by Direct Debit should be read in conjunction with the Direct Debit Guarantee, which we subscribe to. A copy can be obtained from any bank.

If you pay by Direct Debit, cash or cheque and prefer to spread your bills over the year, you can pay by instalments, where flexible payment dates can be offered. For further information and to set up an instalment plan, please contact us on 0345 60 70 456.

For unmetered household customers, we currently offer the following instalment options:

- Two half-yearly instalments – usually 1 April and 1 October
- Eight instalments over a year – usually 1 April to 1 November
- Fortnightly or weekly instalments – usually 1 April to 1 February

If an instalment or Direct Debit collection due date falls on a bank holiday or during a weekend, we will take payment on the next working day. If you pay by instalments, we will notify you in advance of the amount you need to pay. As with all payment arrangements offered, if payments are not made on or by the due dates, the arrangement may be cancelled and any outstanding charges will then be due in full. We may also withdraw the option to pay by instalments in the future.

#### Metered bills

Customers will normally receive two bills a year. Where we do not have an actual reading, bills will be based on an estimate.

Estimated bills are calculated by averaging the daily consumption between two readings, then multiplying this by the number of days in the billing period. In the absence of any Company readings the consumption from the previous billing period will normally be used as the basis for the estimated usage. When you receive an estimated bill from us you can provide us with an actual reading by visiting our website at [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk) or by calling 0345 60 70 456. An amended bill will be issued.



Where for any reason the quantity of water supplied for any period has not been ascertained, we may demand payment in respect of that period on the basis of an estimate of the quantity of water supplied. The estimate is made by reference to a previous like period; calculated to derive an average daily consumption.

If no previous like period exists, the estimate will be based on average usage for a single occupant, a couple or a family. This charge can be adjusted later if necessary.

Any estimated charges may be adjusted, at your request, if the actual volume of water supplied is different from the estimate.

In 2017/18 water and sewerage charges will be applied from the first bill after 1 April 2017. Where this bill covers a billing period up to and after 1 April 2017 we will calculate charges by:

- Averaging the daily consumption and applying this figure to the number of days in the billing period prior to 1 April 2017 and applying the old water and sewerage charges
- Averaging the daily consumption and applying this figure to the number of days in the billing period after 31 March 2017 and applying the new water and sewerage charges

Payment is due on the date shown on the bill.

For metered household customers, we currently offer the following instalment options:

- 12 monthly payments
- Fortnightly or weekly instalments

Customers who select to pay by the above options may only receive one bill a year, showing their estimated charges for the following year.

If an instalment or Direct Debit collection due date falls on a bank holiday or during a weekend, we will take payment on the next working day. If you pay by instalments, we will notify you in advance of the amount you need to pay. As with all payment arrangements offered, if payments are not made on or by the due dates, the arrangement may be cancelled and any outstanding charges will then be due in full. We may also withdraw the option to pay by instalments in the future.

## 4. Payment options and locations

We offer a wide range of payment options to suit our customers. These are summarised in the table below. Please be aware that some payment methods may take longer than others to process and clear.

Locations for payments (free of charge unless stated)	Payment Options					
	Direct Debit	Cheque	Postal Order	Cash	Debit / Credit Card	DWP Direct Payments
My Account (online service)	✓				✓	
Customer's own bank or some building societies	✓	✓		✓		
At any other bank (there may be a charge for this service)		✓		✓		
PayPoint				✓		
Post Office (a counter fee will be charged)		✓		✓		
South Staffs Water (online & telephone)					✓	
South Staffs Water (postal)		✓	✓			
Water Direct via DWP						✓

### My Account

My Account is our online account service where you can manage your bills and payments. The information needed to set up an online account is available on your bill. To register go to [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk/my-account](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk/my-account). Registering enables you to:

- Make a payment
- Set up a Direct Debit
- View your bills
- View your payment history
- View or set up a new payment plan
- Amend your details

### Direct Debit

You can pay your water bill by Direct Debit if you hold a bank account or certain building society accounts. A range of payment dates are available to suit you. A Direct Debit can be set up by calling 0345 60 70 456. This service is free of charge. If you receive a refund that you are not entitled to you must pay it back when we request it.

Payments can be taken when your bill is due. If there is a change to the amount, date or frequency of the payment we will send notification 10 working days before we take the payment. If one of these dates is a bank holiday, or falls over a weekend, we will take payment on the next working day.

### At any PayPoint outlet

If you are paying in cash, PayPoint is the most convenient way to pay your water bill. Your nearest PayPoint location is detailed on the front of your bill. Look out for the distinctive purple and yellow signs located in newsagents, convenience stores, supermarkets, garage forecourts and off licences across the UK. Hand your bill and payment card with your cash to the assistant who will process your payment. You will receive a

printed receipt as proof of payment, which should detail your customer reference number. This service is free of charge. The minimum PayPoint payment is £2 and must be made in cash.

### **Debit and credit card payments**

We can accept debit and credit card payments over the telephone. Call us on 0345 60 70 456. All you need to do is quote your card details and we will do the rest. Debit card payments will be processed free of charge. However, for credit card payments an administrative charge of 0.955% is applied for Visa and 0.985% for MasterCard credit cards.

### **At any Post Office**

Sign and date the payment slip, and take the whole bill with your payment. You can pay by either cash or cheque. Make cheques payable to Post Office Counters Ltd. The Post Office will charge you for this service. You should receive a printed receipt as proof of payment, which should detail your customer reference number.

### **By post**

Send your cheque or postal order with the completed payment slip (no receipt will be issued). The address to send your payment to is:

South Staffs Water Plc  
P.O. Box 63  
Walsall WS2 7PJ

Make cheques payable to South Staffs Water Plc and write your name, address and customer reference number on the back of the cheque. Please do not send post-dated cheques. Please do not send cash through the post - we do not accept any responsibility for cash sent by post. This service is free of charge.

### **At banks and building societies**

Using the payment slip at the bottom of your bill you can pay at any bank and most building societies. Cheques are to be made payable to South Staffs Water Plc. This service is free at your own bank or building society. If you do not hold a bank account at the bank where you make a payment, you may be charged by the bank.

### **Internet or phone banking**

You can pay by internet or phone banking service. Please quote sort code 40-11-18, our bank account number 40770132 and your customer reference number, which can be found on the front of your bill. Payments can take up to five working days to reach us. The bank may charge you for this service.

## 5. Difficulty in paying your bill?

We understand that sometimes you may have difficulty in paying your bill. So that we can help, please tell us straightaway if you can't pay your bill. Ring us on 0800 09 30 610.

### Failure to make payments

Customers who do not keep to agreed payment arrangements, without discussing this with South Staffs Water first, will be required to pay the whole of their debt. Failure to make further payments may result in some or all of the following:

#### Letter

We will write to the customer to notify them of the outstanding amount. If the customer contacts us we will try to resolve any queries and possibly set up a payment arrangement.

#### Personal contact

If the customer does not make contact, we may telephone or visit the customer at their home. The object of this is to:

- Find out why the payment has not been made
- Collect all money, some money, or agree a repayment plan
- Discuss options for independent advice, e.g. Citizens' Advice Bureau
- Collect relevant information which may enable us to arrange for payments to be deducted from any benefits the customer is entitled to
- Find out if the customer is eligible for special tariffs, or arrange to have a meter installed to ensure the customer only pays for the water they consume

#### Collection agencies

If, after writing and attempting to contact a customer, the bill has still not been paid we may use the services of a reputable debt collection agency. We will only use agencies that are members of the Credit Services Association, and as a condition of their membership, have signed up to its code of practice. Any complaints about agents' behaviour should be addressed to South Staffs Water in the first instance.

If your account is in arrears, a default notice may be placed against your credit file. This may affect your credit rating and the decisions that are made by financial services organisations.

#### County court claim

If the customer still refuses to make an arrangement to pay, we may ask the county court to order payment. This means the customer will get a county court claim against them and will also have to pay legal costs.

We will write to the customer after it has issued a claim to explain what a county court judgement means.

## County court judgement

If we receive a judgement from the court, and the customer still does not pay, we may take further legal action. A county court judgement will affect a customer's credit rating. We will write to the customer after the judgement has been received to explain what further legal action we will take if the customer does not pay the full amount due. These options are listed below:

- Warrant of execution - the bailiff of the court is instructed to levy on goods belonging to the customer in order to satisfy the judgement. This means the bailiff may be able to remove possessions from the customer's property and sell them in order to satisfy the debt
- Attachment of earnings order - we may apply to the court for an order to be made which enables the customer's employers to deduct an amount each week/month to eventually settle the debt
- Third party debt order - an application is made to the court for an order to be made to have funds deducted from the customer's bank account or similar source. This involves a hearing before the district judge

All costs, for example, solicitors' costs, court fees, enforcement and warrant costs, incurred by us or our agents in the collection of outstanding charges will be recharged directly to the customer.

## Water Direct (Third Party Deductions)

If you are in financial difficulty and in receipt of certain benefits such as:

- Income Support
- Pension Credit
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Jobseeker's Allowance or
- Universal Credit

You can apply to have payments made directly to us from your benefit by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). This scheme is called Water Direct. The DWP will deduct an agreed amount from your benefit on a weekly basis and pay it directly to us until the outstanding bill is paid or your circumstances change. The DWP will only do this if you are more than six weeks in arrears with your water charges, have failed to budget for the charges and it is in your interest, or that of your family, that direct payments are made. To arrange this, you must contact your DWP office directly with details of your outstanding arrears, or provide us with details of your National Insurance number and we can liaise with them on your behalf. It is important that you let us know if you are facing severe financial difficulty or hardship.

## WaterSure Tariff

The WaterSure tariff is for household customers who have a meter, are on a low income and use a lot of water. It works by putting a cap on the customer's charges for water based on the average household charge. See the detailed section on WaterSure earlier in this document.

## South Staffordshire Water Charitable Trust

If you are experiencing extreme financial difficulties and water is among several outstanding debts then you can make an application to the South Staffordshire Water Charitable Trust. For an application form, please telephone 0345 60 70 456 or visit [www.sswct.org](http://www.sswct.org)

Alternatively you can contact the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB), Welfare Rights Services, StepChange Debt Charity or other free debt advice agencies. It is recommended you contact one of these organisations to receive free impartial debt advice.

By agreeing to, and maintaining, a low-value payment arrangement, the Charitable Trust may be able to make a grant towards your water charges arrears. As part of the application process, we will go through your

financial circumstances with you or the debt advice service may do this and then contact us on your behalf if they feel that you will meet our Charitable Trust criteria. If you are unsure how to contact the CAB or other agencies listed above, or if you have any worries about your financial circumstances and your ability to pay your water charges, then please telephone us on 0800 09 30 610.

Further information about the Charitable Trust can be found by visiting [www.sswct.org](http://www.sswct.org)

## **Assure (Social Tariff)**

The Assure tariff can help household customers on a low income or who are struggling to pay their water charges; it aims to reduce water poverty and make our bills more affordable. Customers with a household income of less than £16,105 (excluding income from Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment and Attendance Allowance), may qualify for a discount of up to 80% on their water charges.

The social tariff will not be available where:

- The premises for which water and/or sewerage charges are payable is not the only or principal home of the occupier and any other qualifying person; or
- The premises are not used solely as a household premises and the other use is the principal use of the premises; or
- Water supplied to the premises is used or passed through a sprinkler, automatic garden watering device or a hosepipe not held in the hand (with the exception of trickle flow devices); or
- There is a swimming pool at the premises with a capacity greater than 10,000 litres, unless the occupier of the premises can satisfy us that no water we supply is at any time used to automatically fill the pool or automatically maintain or increase the level of water in it

Full details of the tariff, eligibility criteria, application process and terms can be found on our website: [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk)

## **Insolvency procedure**

If you enter into a formal insolvency procedure, we will apportion all rate based charges on a daily basis up to the day immediately preceding the effective date of the relevant insolvency procedure ("the insolvency date"). Any apportioned charges after the insolvency date will not be affected by the insolvency procedure.

## 6. New occupiers and moving house

Please give us a minimum of two days' notice when you are moving out of a premises. It is possible to do this by completing the moving house form on our website at [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk), by writing to us or by calling 0345 60 70 456.

If you fail to do so you could be liable to pay charges until whichever is the earliest of:

- The next scheduled meter reading date
- The date we are informed by a new occupier, or
- 28 days from the date you informed us

Where a customer who is liable to pay metered charges vacates the property without notifying us, and a new occupier takes up residence without notifying us, we will take a meter reading as soon as we become aware of the new occupier to establish average daily use. The average daily use will then be used to calculate charges due from the new occupier between the date they occupied the property and the date of the first meter reading taken by us.

Customers moving out of the South Staffs Water area may be eligible for a refund on their water bill. We will send this if a forwarding address is supplied.

If you have an outstanding debt, and fail to notify us when moving house, we will attempt to locate you at your new address to discuss repayment. We do not make additional charges for this activity.

### Prospective occupiers

Prospective occupiers may contact us by phone, email or letter to request information on the existing charging basis for the property in question.

### Change of occupier metering

When a property without a meter either changes ownership or tenanted occupancy of more than six months, we may install a meter and charge a new occupier according to the water used as long as the new occupier has not been billed for unmetered charges. We cannot elect to charge a new occupier by metered charges if one of the original occupiers still resides there.

Full details of our Metering policy can be found in our Code of Practice or on our website at [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk)

## Discontinuation of supplies: Vacant properties

### Unmetered

If an unmetered property is vacant – i.e. furnished but unoccupied - the full unmetered charge will be due unless the customer asks for the property to be disconnected. There is no charge for the property to be disconnected, but there will be a charge for re-connection. This charge will be £63.

No charges will be levied in respect of furnished but unoccupied premises where the non-occupation is due to exceptional circumstances such as death or long-term hospitalisation of the customer.

### Metered

If a metered property is vacant – i.e. furnished but unoccupied – any water usage registered on the meter, along with the full metered standing charges will be due unless the customer asks for the property to be disconnected. There is no charge for the property to be disconnected, but there will be a charge for re-connection. This charge will be £63.

## Discontinuation of supplies: Void properties

### Unmetered

We will not levy a charge on premises which are unfurnished and unoccupied. Premises that are undergoing refurbishment or being used for storage will be considered occupied for the purposes of this scheme by the owners of the premises, with charges payable. Where premises are temporarily unoccupied the water supply and sewerage charges are still payable.

### Metered

If a metered property is void – i.e unfurnished and unoccupied - standing charges will be withdrawn if there is no consumption. Where consumption has been recorded, the property owner will be billed the full charges. Where a property remains void, to prevent leakage and water damage to the property, we may choose to seal or shut the supply off. Where there is evidence that customers have tampered with a seal, we reserve the right to charge for this and any damage caused.

We will disclose your details and/or the property address to third parties who will carry out searches, including credit and electoral role searches, to confirm who has been, is, or may be resident at the property. We will use the information provided by third parties to manage your account, or the account for the property address, for identity verification, billing, debt collection, credit checking and keeping your details or the property details up to date. For further details of how we use your information please read our privacy policy which can be found at [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk)



## 7. Customer responsibility to repair leaks on their supply pipe

It is the property owner's responsibility to repair or replace any leaking supply pipe on their property, even if the supply pipe crosses third-party land. In the case of a leak on a shared supply pipe, all of the properties that receive water from the leaking supply pipe are responsible for the repair or replacement. Our assisted leak repair service is designed to help you find the right solution to fix the leak as quickly as possible. More details can be found at [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk).

For metered customers to qualify for a leakage allowance, you must carry out a repair on your supply pipe within 28 days of being notified of the leak. If you fail to do so, a leakage allowance will not be granted. This allowance is for household customers only and is a "once only" offer per customer for external leakage.

### Further details

For further details regarding leaks, please refer to our Code of Practice for Leakage (Household customers) or visit our website at [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk)

## 8. Non-household charges

Non-household customers are charged by either of the following ways:

- Unmetered – based on the RV of the property; or
- Metered – based on the metered standing charges and the volumetric consumption charge, registered through a water meter

The majority of non-households are charged for their water on a metered basis, in line with standard industry practice. We also collect sewerage and surface water drainage charges on behalf of Severn Trent Water Ltd. These will also be based on the method in which you pay for your water supply.

Value added tax (VAT) is payable by some non-household customers. From 1 July 1990, VAT was added to water charges for payers who fall into categories 1–5 of the 1980 edition of Standard Industrial Classifications. The following table demonstrates these divisions:

Division	Title
1	Energy and water supply industries
2	Extraction of minerals and ores other than fuels, manufacture of metal, mineral products and chemicals
3	Metal goods, engineering and vehicle industries
4	Other manufacturing industries
5	Construction

Although VAT is generally applied in the manner outlined above it is not straightforward as its application can vary.

We will send any new non-household customer a VAT declaration form, asking them to confirm their VAT status. It is the customer's responsibility to declare their correct status. There are HM Revenue and Customs penalties for making false declarations and for fraudulent evasion of VAT.

If you are a non-household customer and eligible to choose your water and wastewater retail service provider this charges scheme is not applicable to you. To learn more speak to us or visit [www.open-water.org.uk](http://www.open-water.org.uk)

### Unmetered charges

The unmetered charges are for:

- Water supply
- Sewage disposal service; and
- Surface water drainage service

For non-household premises these are all based on an amount in the pound, as published by us for the year, multiplied by the RV of the property at the year ended 31 March 1990. This is subject to an annual minimum charge.

## Water supply

The RV of your property is detailed on your bill. Those non-household customers still being charged on an unmetered basis may be contacted and notified that where practicable, a water meter will be fitted and their water charges will be based on the volume of water recorded by the meter. There will be no meter installation costs to customers where meters are fitted compulsorily.

South Staffs Water Supply £0.7459 per £/RV
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Water charges of £0.7459 per £ RV are subject to a minimum charge of £71.93 per annum. There is no standing charge for unmetered charges.

Miscellaneous Unmetered Water Charges	
Taps at allotments, lock-up garages, canal towpaths, etc.	£71.93 pa
Cattle troughs	£103.50 pa
Places of worship	£71.93 pa
Household swimming pools - less than 10,000 litres capacity	£81.70 pa

## Sewerage and surface water drainage charges

Severn Trent Water			
Charging zones (refer to page 6 for details)	Sewerage and surface water charges (£/RV)	Surface water only charge (£/RV)	Sewerage only charge (£/RV)
2	0.9232	0.3061	0.6498
3	0.9720	0.3234	0.6831
6	1.1884	0.3892	0.8416
7	1.1584	0.3798	0.8198
8	0.9655	0.3234	0.6764

For most customers, the rain that falls onto the roof, yard and other parts of their property drains into the sewers. However there are some properties where water does not drain to the sewer, for example if it drains into a septic tank or soakaway, and so you may be able to get a reduction in your charges. More information is available in the leaflet 'Surface Water Drainage'. To obtain a copy visit our website at: [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk) or contact 0345 60 70 456. The above charges may be subject to VAT.

## Metered charges

If you have a meter, your charge is based on the water registered through the meter. We also collect sewerage charges on behalf of Severn Trent Water Ltd. Sewerage charges are also based on the water registered through the meter. For most customers, it is assumed that 'water in' equals 'water out'. We also collect Surface Water Drainage Charges on behalf of Severn Trent Water Ltd, for more information please see page 29.

## Standard tariff

The charges for a standard metered supply to any premises shall comprise:

- Water standing charges. These are fixed charges that vary with the size of your supply pipe and cover the extra costs not incurred with an unmetered supply. These costs include reading, maintaining and replacing defective meters
- A consumption charge calculated by multiplying the volume of water supplied and sewerage treated by the rate per cubic metre (as shown in the table below)
- A surface water drainage charge is a fixed charge, which varies based on the drainable site area of your property

### (Up to 4,999 m<sup>3</sup>/annum)

Size of meter (mm)	South Staffs Water		Severn Trent Water	
	Water supply £ per cubic metre (m <sup>3</sup> )	Water standing charge (£/pa)	Sewerage volumetric charge £ per cubic metre (m <sup>3</sup> ) up to 50,000 m <sup>3</sup>	Sewerage standing charge (£/pa)
15	1.0018	35.00	0.9477	12.94
20	1.0018	81.52	0.9477	12.94
25	1.0018	112.68	0.9477	12.94
35	1.0018	148.03	0.9477	12.94
40	1.0018	248.99	0.9477	12.94
50	1.0018	288.14	0.9477	12.94
80	1.0018	371.64	0.9477	12.94

## (5,000 to 49,999 m<sup>3</sup>/annum)

Size of meter (mm)	South Staffs Water		Severn Trent Water	
	Water supply £ per cubic metre (m <sup>3</sup> )	Water standing charge (£/pa)	Sewerage volumetric charge £ per cubic metre (m <sup>3</sup> ) up to 50,000 m <sup>3</sup>	Sewerage standing charge (£/pa)
15	0.9582	104.59	0.9477	12.94
20	0.9582	104.59	0.9477	12.94
25	0.9582	104.59	0.9477	12.94
35	0.9582	104.59	0.9477	12.94
40	0.9582	175.59	0.9477	12.94
50	0.9582	180.59	0.9477	12.94
80	0.9582	185.59	0.9477	12.94
100	0.9582	894.87	0.9477	12.94
150	0.9582	1126.58	0.9477	12.94
200	0.9582	1461.56	0.9477	12.94
300	0.9582	2618.77	0.9477	12.94

## Surface water drainage charges for metered non-household customers

In addition to the metered water and sewerage charges detailed above, some metered customers pay for their surface water drainage based on the RV of their property, where one exists. The charges for this are shown in the table below:

Severn Trent Water	
Charging zones (refer to page 6 for details)	Surface water only charge (£/RV)
2	0.3061
3	0.3234
6	0.3892
7	0.3798
8	0.3234

For most customers, the rain that falls onto the roof, yard and other parts of their property drains into the sewers. However there are some properties where water does not drain to the sewer, for example if it drains into a septic tank or soakaway, and so you may be able to get a reduction in your charges. More information is available in the leaflet 'Surface Water Drainage'. To obtain a copy visit our website at: [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk) or contact 0345 60 70 456. The above charges may be subject to VAT.

## 9. Billing and payment frequencies

Charges are normally payable by the occupier of the property receiving the supply or any other persons the supply is available to.

Except where:

- The owner of the property who is not the occupier is liable by or under any statutory enactment
- By agreement of any person who has agreed to pay the charges
- By agreement with us

Where a tenancy is for a period less than 12 months the owner may be liable to pay the water service charges. Where we are unaware of any tenants, we shall continue to bill the owner as the occupier until such time as details of the tenancy are evidenced to us. Where tenant information is provided after the date of first occupation, by omission of the tenant or landlord, the owner shall remain liable for the charges incurred up to the date of notification.

Billing and payment times will vary dependent upon whether you are a metered or an unmetered household customer.

### Unmetered bills

Bills for unmetered water charges will be sent annually during March. Payment is due in advance for the whole year on 1 April. If your bill is sent out later than March, payment will be due on the date shown on your bill.

### Metered bills

If you are a metered non-household customer on the standard non-household tariff, you will normally receive two bills a year, however where an instalment plan is in place we may issue one bill a year.

Where we do not have an actual reading, bills will be based on an estimate. The estimated bills are calculated by averaging the daily consumption between two Company readings, then multiplying this by the number of days in the billing period. In the absence of any Company readings the consumption from the previous billing period will normally be used as the basis for the estimated usage. When you receive an estimated bill from us you can provide us with an actual reading by visiting our website at [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk) or calling 0345 60 70 456. An amended bill will be issued.

If an instalment date falls on a bank holiday, or during a weekend, we will take payment on the next working day. We will notify you in advance of the amount you need to pay.

As with all payment arrangements offered, if payments are not made on or by the due dates, the arrangement may be cancelled and any outstanding charges will then be due in full. We may also withdraw the option to pay by instalments in the future.

Where for any reason the quantity of water supplied for any period has not been ascertained, we may demand payment in respect of that period on the basis of an estimate of the quantity of water supplied. Any estimated charges may be adjusted, at your request, if the actual volume of water supplied is different from the estimate. New water and sewerage charges will be applied from the first bill after 1 April 2017. Where this bill covers a billing period prior to and after 1 April 2017 we will calculate charges by:

- Averaging the daily consumption and applying this figure to the number of days in the billing period prior to 1 April 2017 and applying the old water and sewerage charges
- Averaging the daily consumption and applying this figure to the number of days in the billing period after 31 March 2017 and applying the new water and sewerage charges

## **Insolvency Procedure**

If you enter into a formal insolvency procedure, we will apportion all rate based charges on a daily basis up to the day immediately preceding the effective date of the relevant insolvency procedure ("the insolvency date"). Any apportioned charges after the insolvency date will not be affected by the insolvency procedure.

## 10. Payment options and locations

We offer a wide range of payment options to suit our customers. These are summarised in the table below. Please be aware that some payment methods may take longer than others to process and clear.

Locations for payments (free of charge unless stated)	Payment Options					
	Direct Debit	Cheque	Postal Order	Cash	Debit / Credit Card	DWP Direct Payments
My Account (online service)	✓				✓	
Customer's own bank or some building societies	✓	✓		✓		
At any other bank (there may be a charge for this service)		✓		✓		
PayPoint				✓		
Post Office (a counter fee will be charged)		✓		✓		
South Staffs Water (online & telephone)					✓	
South Staffs Water (postal)		✓	✓			
Water Direct via DWP						✓

### My Account

My Account is our online account service where you can manage your bills and payments. The information needed to set up an online account is available on your bill. To register go to <https://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk/my-account>. Registering enables you to:

- Make a payment
- Set up a Direct Debit
- View your bills
- View your payment history
- View your payment plan
- Amend your details

### Direct Debit

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Payments can be taken when your bill is due. If there is a change to the amount, date or frequency of the payment we will send notification 10 working days before we take the payment. If one of these dates is a bank holiday, or falls over a weekend, we will take payment on the next working day.



## At any PayPoint outlet

If you are paying in cash, PayPoint is the most convenient way to pay your water bill. Your nearest PayPoint location is detailed on the front of your bill. Look out for the distinctive purple and yellow signs located in newsagents, convenience stores, supermarkets, garage forecourts and off licences across the UK. Hand your bill and payment card with your cash to the assistant who will process your payment. You will receive a printed receipt as proof of payment, which should detail your customer reference number. This service is free of charge. The minimum PayPoint payment is £2 and must be made in cash.

## Debit and credit card payments

We can accept debit and credit card payments over the telephone. Call us on 0345 60 70 456. All you need to do is quote your card details and we will do the rest. Debit card payments will be processed free of charge. However, for credit card payments an administrative charge of 0.955% is applied for Visa and 0.985% for MasterCard credit cards.

## At any Post Office

Sign and date the payment slip, and take the whole bill with your payment. You can pay by either cash or cheque. Make cheques payable to Post Office Counters Ltd. The Post Office will charge you for this service. You should receive a printed receipt as proof of payment, which should detail your customer reference number.

## By post

Send your cheque or postal order with the completed payment slip (no receipt will be issued). The address to send your payment to is:

South Staffs Water Plc  
P.O. Box 63  
Walsall WS2 7PJ

Make cheques payable to South Staffs Water Plc and write your name, address and customer reference number on the back of the cheque. This service is free of charge. Please do not send post-dated cheques. Please do not send cash through the post - we do not accept any responsibility for cash sent by post.

## At banks and building societies

Using the payment slip at the bottom of your bill you can pay at any bank and most building societies. Please make cheques payable to South Staffs Water Plc. This service is free at your own bank or building society. If you do not hold a bank account at the bank where you make a payment, you may be charged by the bank.

## Internet or phone banking

Please quote sort code 40-11-18, our bank account number 40770132 and your customer reference number, which can be found on your bill. Payments can take up to five working days to reach us. The bank may charge you for this service.

## Unpaid bill and collections procedure

We will send a reminder 14 days after your bill is due. If your account still remains unpaid 14 days after this date, we will send notification of our intention to disconnect your supply at least seven days before the supply is due to be disconnected. This notice details the additional costs you will incur if your supply is disconnected and subsequently reconnected.

We have the right to separate the supplies of mixed-use properties and non-household properties with a schedule 4a element under Section 64 of the 1999 Act. If it is possible to separate the supply, we will, where possible, install a water meter on the non-household element of the property upon separation. Also, if

payments are overdue on the non-household element, we reserve the right to subsequently disconnect its water supply. We may apply for a Warrant of Entry to enable us to do this. Re-connection charges are liable in such circumstances. A mixed-use property is defined as a single supply to a property that is only partly used as a household dwelling and the larger part of the property is non-household.

If we have disconnected a non-household customer for non-payment of their bill, we reserve the right to request a security deposit equivalent to 90 days' consumption before re-connection.

Where we choose not to disconnect a non-household or mixed-use property for non-payment, we may seek to recover the outstanding charges through the county court or other litigation processes.

## **Security deposits for non-household customers**

Payment is due on demand. In certain circumstances the company may insist on payment of a deposit or another form of security in advance to cover payment of future charges. Such a demand may be made:

- Where a credit check has been undertaken and revealed a risk of non-payment
- Where there is no credit history
- Where there is a history of late payments

Security will be accepted in the form of cash payments to be held on the account, or in the form of a parent company or bank guarantee.

Where a cash deposit is made it will be equivalent of 90 days' consumption. The calculation for daily consumption will be based upon the historical consumption details for the property that is to be occupied by the business. If consumption history is not available, or the expected consumption of the business is expected to be significantly different from previous occupiers, the daily consumption will be derived from the average consumption of the same industry sector that the business relates to. The minimum security deposit that will be requested is £150. The deposit is returned after 12 months where a suitable payment record is maintained by the customer.

# 11. Change of occupier/Notice of vacation

## Unmetered

If you are vacating your property and a new occupier is moving in, you should notify us of the date on which you are intending to move. Accordingly, the new customer should notify us of the date on which they are intending to move in.

## Metered

Where charges are fixed in relation to any premises by reference to volume, the person made chargeable in relation to those premises as occupier may be liable to pay such charges after the customer has ceased to be the occupier of the premises. This applies where the customer fails to notify us of the ending of the occupation of the premises at least two working days before they cease to occupy them in accordance with Section 144 of the 1991 Act.

The charges for which the customer will be liable will be those for the period ending in terms of whichever of the following first occurs after they cease to occupy the premises:

- (a) Where the customer informs us of the ending of the occupation of the premises less than two working days before, or at any time after the customer ceases to occupy them, the 28<sup>th</sup> day after we have been informed
- (b) Any day on which any meter would normally have been read in order for the amount of the charges to be determined
- (c) Any day on which any other person informs us that they have become the new occupier of the premises

References to two working days are references to the period of 48 hours, calculated after disregarding any time falling on a Saturday or Sunday or on any day which is a bank holiday.

Where the person chargeable is not the occupier of the metered premises, the customer may be held liable until the expiry of 28 days' notice in writing that s/he no longer resides at the property and does not require a supply.

The 28 days commence from the date the notice is received at our head office in Walsall. This provision will apply when the occupier vacates the premises, but remains the owner of the premises without giving us notice of vacation.

## Discontinuation of supplies

If you want your water supply to be disconnected when you vacate your property, you must advise us. Under certain circumstances, you may be liable for charges if you fail to inform us of the change. Where a property is disconnected and there is evidence that customers have tampered with a seal, we reserve the right to charge for this and any damage caused. We also reserve the right to meter such properties.

## 12. Metering policy

### New water supplies

All new household water supply connections made on or after 1990 are metered where the preferred meter location is outside at the boundary of the property. This is normally where our existing main stop tap is located either on the footpath or just within the boundary of the property.

### Existing water supplies/household meter option

#### Right to be charged by meter

All household customers have the right to request the installation of a meter free of charge. A request for metered charges may be made in writing, by email, by telephone or via the website [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk)

A survey will be arranged to confirm where the meter may be installed. If substantial alterations to plumbing are required the customer can complete these at their own expense. The customer should request a quote from an independent plumber.

The meter should be fitted within 90 days of us receiving your application. We do aim to fit meters sooner than this if we can.

Customers who cannot have their property metered may be eligible to pay an assessed charge.

#### Rights of tenants to have a meter

Where a tenancy applies for six months or more, a tenant has the right under section 209a of the Water Industry Act 1991 to ask the Company to install a water meter. While landlords may not legally prevent an application or the installation of a meter, we recommend they be informed of a tenant's intention to apply for a meter.

#### Payment conditions

Household customers applying for a free installation of a water meter are required to pay their unmetered water charges until the meter is fitted. Normal debt recovery will continue if unmetered charges are unpaid. Once the meter has been fitted, any credit or debit will be refunded or billed separately from your metered water charges.

#### Guaranteed installation times for meters

Where a household customer has requested a water meter, we aim to install the meter within three months of the application being received. If we take longer than 90 days to fit the meter, we will start metered water charges from the date of the meter installation and will stop charges based on rateable value (RV) at the end of the three month period. Where additional charges have been paid by you in connection with a meter installation, we will aim to fit the meter within 15 working days of receipt of payment.

#### Multi-occupied property

In instances where you request a meter for a flat/multi occupied property, a survey will be done. In these circumstances we will determine if there is a shared hot water and/or heating system which may affect whether a meter can be installed. We will confirm the available options following the survey.

If we determine that two meters are to be installed you will be required to pay one standing charge for water services and one standing charge for sewerage services.

We will consider fitting a single meter for a multi-occupied property (e.g. block of flats) where one person or organisation will accept responsibility for the bill.

## **Removal of a meter by a third party without consent**

Under the WIA 1991, it is a criminal offence to remove, wilfully damage or tamper with a water meter. If charged with doing so, you could face going to court and being fined. In addition you shall be charged the cost to replace the meter and associated works to replace the meter.

## **Refusing a request**

If the initial survey shows that a meter cannot be fitted either inside or outside at a reasonable cost, we will offer you the alternative of paying by an assessed charge for your water and sewerage services. Assessed charges are based on your property type and not its RV. If the RV is lower than the assessed charge, then you would continue to be charged on the basis of RV.

## **Referring a dispute**

Ofwat will determine a dispute concerning the company's refusal to install a meter free of charge.

## **Reversion to unmetered charges**

The customer may revert to unmetered charges as long as:

- The occupier gives notice to us within:
  - 24 months of the first day of charging by meter (having previously been charged at that property on an unmetered basis); or
  - 30 days of receiving your statement of water use in the first 24 month period
- This is the first time that the occupier has asked to change back to unmetered charges at that property; and:
  - One of the consumers who occupied the premises at the time of the change to meter charges, still occupies the premises at the time of notice of reversion (i.e. a new occupier cannot demand reversion to unmetered charges); and
  - The customer opted to have the meter installed. Reversion is not available for properties that have been compulsorily metered

Reversion to unmetered charges takes effect from the day that the request to revert is received by us. We will need to take a final meter reading to be able to complete reversion.

You can either contact us on 0345 60 70 456, or write to South Staffs Water, Green Lane, Walsall WS2 7PD.

If an occupier elects to revert to unmetered charges, we will not physically remove the meter from the property.

## **General Conditions**

### **Cost of reinstatement**

If it is necessary to excavate your driveway, footpath or patio we will confirm this at the survey and will ensure that the area is made safe after fitting the meter. The permanent reinstatement of any disturbed area is at the customer's expense.

### **Ownership of the meter**

Irrespective of who installs the meter, it remains, or becomes, the property of the Company.

## Change of use

If water use changes to non-household use or there are substantial alterations or conversions to premises where there is a common supply pipe serving two or more premises in separate occupation, the supply to the original premises that has changed use will be metered. We will survey the property to determine where the meter will be installed and will confirm any costs applicable. Customers whose water use changes to non-household use are eligible to choose their water supplier. For more information visit us at <https://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk/help-and-advice/read/can-i-change-my-water-supplier-20010000002939> or visit [www.open-water.org.uk](http://www.open-water.org.uk)

If a meter cannot be fitted at the outside stop tap or internally either:

- The person chargeable for the supply must provide for the common supply to be separated or a separate metered supply to be installed to the premises; or
- The occupier or owner of the premises seeks agreement with us to pay the water service charges for all the premises serviced by the common service pipe, provided that all the occupiers of the premises concerned agree. The nominated owner or occupier will also have to make their own arrangements to recover any amount due from the other owners or occupiers

## Mixed use properties

We have the right to separate the supplies of mixed-use properties and non-household properties with a schedule 4a element under Section 64 of the 1999 Act. If it is possible to separate the supply, we will, where possible, install a water meter on the non-household element of the property upon separation. Also, if payments are overdue on the non-household element, we reserve the right to subsequently disconnect its water supply. We may apply for a Warrant of Entry to enable us to do this. Re-connection charges are liable in such circumstances. A mixed-use property is defined as a single supply to a property that is only partly used as a household dwelling and the larger part of the property is non-household.

If we have disconnected a non-household customer for non-payment of their bill, we reserve the right to request a security deposit equivalent to 90 days' consumption before re-connection.

Where we choose not to disconnect a non-household or mixed-use property for non-payment, we may seek to recover the outstanding charges through the county court or other litigation processes.

## Access

The customer is to provide reasonable access to our meter reading equipment for routine reading, ad hoc reading and repairs. If continued access to the equipment is denied, we may suspend the charging based on metered usage and an alternative charging method will apply. As previously noted, under the WIA 1991, it is a criminal offence to restrict access to our meter.

If an alternative charging method cannot be determined, we reserve the right to install an additional accessible meter for our convenience. All charges related to this installation will be borne by the customer.

## Reading water meters

We will normally install meters with remote reading devices so that we can read the meter without requiring entry to the property.

## Stopped/inaccessible meters

In the event of the meter stopping or being temporarily inaccessible, consumption will be estimated by us using the most reliable data available until such time we are able to install a new meter.

## Accuracy of meter readings

The register of the meter shall be evidence of the volume of water supplied unless it can be shown that the meter does not meet the standard of accuracy required by the Measuring Equipment Regulations 1988.

The procedure for the testing of meters is set out in government regulations.

## High consumption queries or concerns that the meter is not accurate

We have a three-stage policy for dealing with queries relating to the accuracy of meter readings:

- **Stage 1** - If the customer is concerned the meter is showing more water than they believe they have actually used, we will review the consumption history and current usage with the customer to help resolve the query
- **Stage 2** - If there is no explanation for the increased consumption for household customers we can carry out a detailed on-site inspection where we will check for evidence of any leaks, for example on toilets, ball valves and taps. This inspection is free for household customers
- **Stage 3** - If the customer still believes that the meter is not recording consumption accurately it is possible to change the meter and have it tested by a meter test specialist. However, if the test does not show the meter to be outside the accuracy limits required, the customer will be liable for the cost of the test at £70.00 plus VAT

## Adjustment of charges

If a meter is proven to register incorrectly, charges will be adjusted to reflect normal consumption from either the date the meter became faulty or for the six months prior to the last reading, whichever is the earlier.

## Meter logging

Where we fit a data logger to assist in the determination of any consumption or bill queries for household customers the costs will not be passed to the customer.

## Estimates on unread meters

If we are unable to establish how much water has actually been supplied to the property, we may make an estimate and use this as the basis for charges.

The estimate is made by reference to a previous like period, calculated to derive an average daily consumption.

If no previous like period exists, the estimate will be based on average usage for a single occupant, a couple or a family. This charge can be adjusted later if necessary.

Full details of our metering policy can be found in our Code of Practice or on our website at [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk)

## 13. Customer information/how to contact us

General Information can be found on our website at: [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk)

### This information includes:

- Our Code of Practice for Leakage (Household Customers)
- Our Codes of Practice for Household Customers
- Our Code of Practice for Household Customer Debt
- Surface Water Drainage
- About our Customer Complaints Procedure
- WaterSure leaflet
- Extra Help If You Need It, Water Use in Your Home
- Your Guide to Household Water Meters

## Billing and General Account Enquiries

General information can be found on our website: [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk)

Opening hours for general account enquiries:

7am – 8pm Monday-Friday

8am - 1pm Saturday

Bill enquiries: 0345 60 70 456

Difficulty paying: 0800 09 30 610

To set up a Direct Debit: 0345 60 70 456

Household meter option: 0345 45 67 063

Provide a meter reading: 0345 60 70 456

## Water Issues

General information can be found on our website at [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk)

Opening hours for emergencies, leaks or water supply problems:

24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you have any problems regarding the quality or pressure of your water please call us:

Supply enquiries and emergencies: 0800 389 10 11

If you see a leak within South Staffs Water's area, please contact us on: 0800 389 10 11

## Other useful numbers

To check a caller is genuine: 0800 389 10 11

CrimeStoppers (an independent organisation): 0800 555 111

Sewer and drainage issues (Severn Trent Water): 0800 783 44 44

South Staffs Water fax number: 01922 61 62 39

Postal address:

South Staffs Water

Green Lane

Walsall WS2 7PD



## Our Commitment to You

### Customer Complaints Procedure

We aim to provide you with an excellent service, but sometimes things can go wrong. We take complaints very seriously, so if you are not happy with our service we will do our best to put things right.

We offer a nominee service whereby if you prefer, you can nominate someone who helps you to look after your affairs to liaise with us on your behalf. We will need written agreement from you both before we proceed.

As we collect sewerage charges for Severn Trent Water, we will answer any complaints regarding your sewerage charges. However, complaints about sewerage services are handled direct by Severn Trent Water. You can contact them at:

Severn Trent Water  
Customer Care Team,  
PO Box 5309,  
Coventry CV3 9FH

Telephone: 0800 783 4444

**Step 1:** If you have a complaint about your bill, please call our Customer Contact Centre on: 0345 60 70 456

If you have a complaint about the water supply, please call us on: 0800 389 10 11

If you are unhappy with the outcome of your call, you can write to us:

Customer Relations  
South Staffs Water  
Green Lane  
Walsall WS2 7PD

Under our Guaranteed Standards of Service, if we fail to respond to your written complaint within 10 working days from receipt we will automatically issue you with a payment of £30.

**Step 2:** If you are not satisfied with our response to your complaint, you can write to our Service Delivery Team Manager, who will carry out a further review.

Service Delivery Team Manager  
South Staffs Water  
Green Lane  
Walsall WS2 7PD

**Step 3:** If, having gone through the first two steps, you feel your complaint has not been resolved; you can refer it to the Consumer Council for Water (CCWater), the independent body set up to represent customers.

Consumer Council for Water  
1st Floor, Victoria Square House  
Victoria Square  
Birmingham B2 4AJ

Telephone: 0300 034 2222

Email: [enquiries@ccwater.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ccwater.org.uk), website: [www.ccwater.org.uk](http://www.ccwater.org.uk)

**Step 4**

If you remain dissatisfied following CCWater's efforts to resolve your complaint, you may be eligible to refer it to the Water Redress Scheme known as WATRS.

WATRS is an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) scheme to help resolve the very small number of customer complaints where the customer remains dissatisfied after the company procedure and CCWater involvement. WATRS provides an alternative to going to Court or a Tribunal.

WATRS decision is binding on the water company.

You can make an application, free of charge, via WATRS website [www.watrs.org](http://www.watrs.org) or you can email [info@watrs.org](mailto:info@watrs.org) to ask for an application form to be sent to you.

Guidance notes are also available on the website or you can request that a copy be sent to you by telephoning 0207 520 3801.

WATRS  
Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution  
International Dispute Resolution Centre  
70 Fleet Street  
London  
EC4Y 1EU

Further information about WATRS can be found on our website:  
[www.south-staffs-water.co.uk](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk)

## **Ofwat**

Ofwat is the Government department responsible for making sure that the water industry in England and Wales provides customers with a good quality product and efficient service at a fair price.

Ofwat also deal with some cases, examples of these include:

- Those about water and sewerage companies' powers to lay pipes on private land
- Concerns that water companies are allegedly breaking their licence conditions or their main water supply or sewerage duties
- Complaints about anti-competitive behaviour under the Competition Act 1998, for example colluding on pricing or bidding for contracts

For more information visit: [www.ofwat.gov.uk](http://www.ofwat.gov.uk)

Ofwat  
Centre City Tower  
7 Hill Street  
Birmingham B5 4UA