



Your water and wastewater services

A guide for business customers

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United Utilities Water Limited (United Utilities) is the water and wastewater service provider for the North West region of England, it's our job to keep the taps flowing and toilets flushing for around seven million people every day.

The water market has undergone a number of significant changes over the last few years following the introduction of retail competition for business customers. This guide helps to explain more about the services we provide to businesses and the standards of service you can expect to receive from us. At the same time we want to make sure that you understand the role of your retailer and your responsibilities and what you can do to protect your business in the event of any water supply issues or service interruptions.



What's the difference between United Utilities and my retailer?

For business customers the open water retail market works in a similar way to the other utility markets, such as gas, electricity and telecoms.

Water companies, like ourselves, sell water and wastewater services to retailers who then sell these on to business customers and bill customers for these services. Retailers compete with each other by offering the best deals and businesses can choose which retailer to buy their water and wastewater services from.

As a result of these changes some of the responsibilities of the water companies have changed. Regardless of who your water retailer is, United Utilities still supplies your water and takes away the wastewater from those businesses who are located in the North West of England as it always has.

However, retailers are now your main point of contact for many of the things that you would previously have contacted us about including:

- Billing and charges
- Meter reading
- Customer services

If you have any queries about your bill or need to discuss your charges please contact your retailer direct. You can find contact details for your retailer on your water bill or at www.open-water.org.uk/find-your-current-retailer

Your retailer may also provide a range of additional water-related services to support your business.

United Utilities

- Treats and supplies your water
- Takes away and treats your wastewater

Retailer

- Issues your water bill
- Reads your meters
- Is your main contact for customer services

What you can expect from United Utilities

As mentioned earlier, if your business is located in the North West then it's likely that your water and wastewater services are provided by United Utilities¹, regardless of your retailer. We've explained more about the services you receive from us on the following pages.

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¹ Some business customers may be served by a NAV (New appointments and variations). NAVs are limited companies which provide a water and/or sewerage service to customers in an area which was previously provided by the incumbent monopoly provider. More details about NAVs can be found here:

www.ofwat.gov.uk/regulated-companies/markets/nav-market

Our water services

The quality of your water

A continuous supply of safe clean drinking water is vital to maintain public health and keep your business open. Every day we provide high quality drinking water to approximately 3.2 million homes and businesses, serving 7 million people across the north west of England. Ensuring the quality of that drinking water is fundamental to the service we provide to our customers.

We make sure your drinking water is of the highest quality at all times. There are certain legally enforceable quality standards that we are measured against. We constantly monitor the quality of water as it leaves our water treatment works and service reservoirs and throughout the network.



Where your water comes from

Whilst our water meets very strict drinking water regulations, the 'type' of water (i.e. ground water, river water etc.) will mean that for different parts of our region the 'make up' of the water you receive could be different i.e. hard or soft water and different amounts of natural occurring elements and minerals.

Throughout the North West our treatment works and service reservoirs supply water into 261 individual areas that we call water supply zones. The water supplied to you will usually be from one particular source or a particular mix of water sources. However we do change the amount of different sources we use at any point in time to balance resources or allow for maintenance to

our treatment works or network. This can mean that the make-up of your water may change from time to time.

Most business customers won't be affected by the make-up of the water that they receive. However we do recognise that for some industrial customers the water quality parameters can be an important consideration for you and have implications for your processes.

We can't guarantee the exact makeup of water we provide to your business, but we can provide in depth analysis of the supplies you receive so that you can put in place any screening or pre-treatment facilities you may need to meet your individual business needs.

Further information on the quality of water in your area can be found here:
unitedutilities.com/help-and-support/your-water-supply

For some customers the pH of your water may be another important factor. A factsheet on pH and how we control it can be found on our website:
unitedutilities.com/globalassets/documents/pdf/phfactsheet_acc16.pdf

Another useful leaflet about water hardness can be found here:
www.unitedutilities.com/globalassets/documents/pdf/10586_6335-water-hardness-factsheet-2025-web-acc.pdf



Our water services

Water pressure

Water pressure is a measure of the force that transports water through our mains and into the pipes supplying your business. It is measured in 'bars' - one bar is the force needed to raise water to a height of 10 metres. We need pressure to push water through our pipes and into homes and businesses, regardless of whether your premises is at sea level or located in a higher or hillier area.

How much pressure should I have?

The water industry regulator Ofwat sets out that water companies must maintain a minimum pressure of water in the communication pipe serving your premises of seven metres static head or 0.7 bar.

The amount of pressure at your business depends on how high our service reservoir or water tower is above your premises, or on how much water is being used by other customers at any particular time.

Pressure can vary at different times of the day. It is normally higher late at night when less water is being taken from our network.

Pressure also varies with the ground level. In hilly areas, the pressure will usually be high in the valleys which are a long way below our reservoirs, and lower on the hilltops.

Although the statutory minimum level of 0.7 bar/7 metres head is required by our regulator we often run our network at higher pressures, however we can't guarantee anything higher than the minimum standard.

For most business users the statutory minimum level of 0.7 bar/7 metres head is usually sufficient for their needs. However, for some larger industrial customers who for example might have elevated storage tanks on site, or for those who need higher operating pressures than the minimum standards, you may need to consider some back up or support systems to make sure that you can continue to fill header tanks or provide water to your process should 0.7 bar/7 metres head of pressure not be enough. For example you may need to consider booster pumps within your private pipework to ensure header tanks can continue to be filled if pressure is reduced.



Continuity of supply

Do I need backup storage for my business?

Whilst we aim to provide you with a continuous supply of water, running a network of over 40,000 km of pipes means inevitably we will have supply issues from time to time.

Businesses should therefore undertake their own business continuity planning and assess how critical water is to their process.

We would encourage you to decide how you will continue to operate during any period of interrupted supply. Your retailer can often help with your contingency planning for example to assess how much storage may be required or provide information on additional pumping facilities to alleviate pressure issues. Retailers can also often introduce industry contractors specialising in this type of work.



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Supply pipes into your premises

When things go wrong it's important to understand who's responsible for fixing and replacing the water pipes feeding your premises.

Your responsibility

As the owner or occupier of a business premises, you (or your landlord depending on the terms of your rental agreement) are responsible for repairing and maintaining the supply pipe from the boundary of the street in which the main is laid all the way into your premises. It is your responsibility to keep the supply pipe in good order, in the same way as you are responsible for your internal plumbing. If there's a leak on the supply pipe inside your property boundary, then the repair would be your responsibility.

Internal stop tap

You should always have the ability to isolate your supply by means of an internal or alternatively an external stop tap close to where your supply enters your premises. You and any employees should know where this is and how to operate it in case of emergencies.



Sometimes, your supply pipe may go out of your boundary on to other private or publicly owned land, however you would still be responsible for the repair of this part of the pipework.

If you rent or lease your premises, contact your landlord or the property owner to discuss any leaks that need

repairing. Check your rental agreement as you may need to arrange the repair yourself.

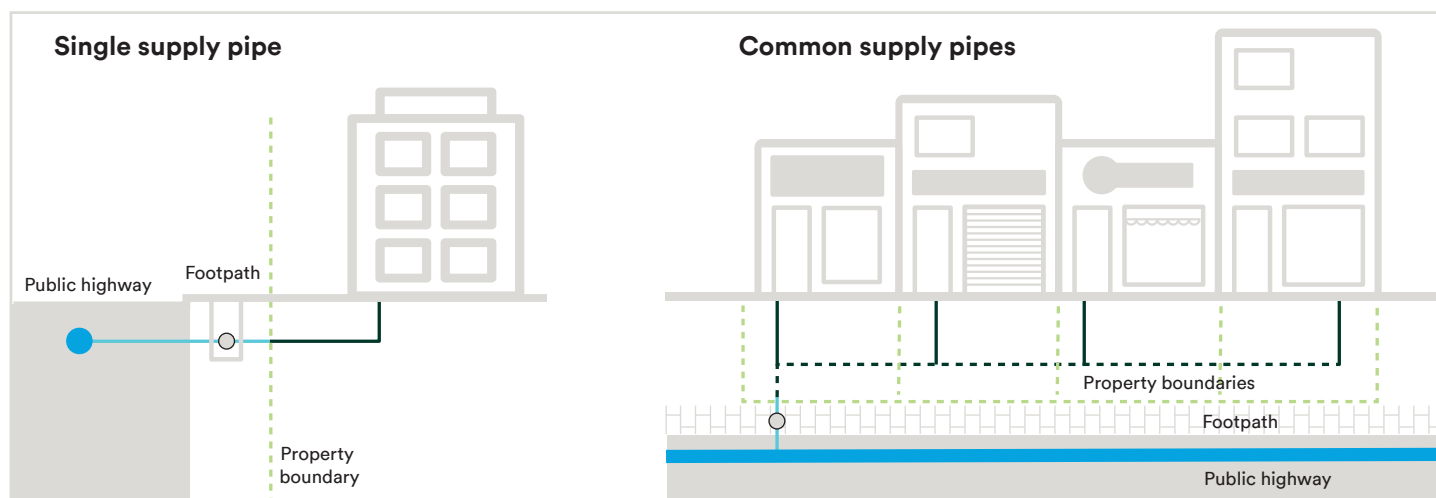
It's also a good idea to make sure your pipes are protected from freezing and bursting in the winter months. You can find lots of help and advice about how to avoid frozen pipes at a number of industry recognised websites. Advice can be found on the Water UK website [water.org.uk/advice-for-customers](https://www.water.org.uk/advice-for-customers) and you can find advice on how to source emergency plumbers via the WaterSafe national scheme at [watersafe.org.uk](https://www.watersafe.org.uk)

Our responsibility

We are responsible for the large water mains in the road and the smaller communication pipes up to the boundary of your business premises.

We will also maintain and repair any of our assets like a water meter or meter chamber. Your water meter can be inside or outside your premises, either way we would be responsible for maintaining this for you, with the exception of any internal pipework either side of your meter.

If present, an external stop tap is usually in the footpath or road and may be shared with your neighboring properties in some cases. If your stop tap is within your boundary we may be able to help locate it in emergency situations, but we do not routinely replace or repair external stop taps.



Key

- Supply pipe/Branch pipe** (responsibility of customer)
- Common supply pipe** (joint responsibility of all customers who are supplied by this pipe)

- Communication pipe** (responsibility of United Utilities)
- External stop tap** (responsibility of United Utilities)
- Water main** (responsibility of United Utilities)

Our wastewater services

Sewerage - roles and responsibilities

United Utilities owns and maintains over 77,000km of sewers and surface water drains in the North West combined with over 550 wastewater treatment sites treating wastewater from 3.2 million homes and businesses.

Most business customers use the sewer network in a similar way to domestic customers, what you might call 'loos and brews', discharging domestic type wastewater. Other customers discharge wastewater from industrial processes known as 'Trade Effluent'. To discharge trade effluent you need a consent issued by United Utilities. We explain more about trade effluent on page 10.

Just like your water supply, it's important to know where the responsibilities start and finish should there ever be a need to contact us over a wastewater incident, blockage, sewer flooding etc.

Your responsibilities

You (or your landlord depending on the terms of your rental agreement) are responsible for any pipework that transports your wastewater from your premises to a public sewer. This is usually within the boundary of the property or up to the point pipework serves two or more properties. This means that in some cases pipework from two premises might join inside a property boundary. So even though the pipework is on private land, you will only be responsible for your own pipework up to the point it joins with another customer's pipe.

The Water Industry (Schemes for Adoption of Private Sewers) Regulations 2011 'Private sewers regulations' brought into force some changes to the way some sewers are classified. In the case of any queries we may need to review on a case by case basis.

Water UK has also published useful guidance on what has transferred:

www.water.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Private-Sewer-Transfer-Water-UK-Template.pdf

Sewer flooding, whilst thankfully quite rare, can have a big impact on your business. If something does go wrong on your pipework it can be expensive to repair. We always recommend that you check your business insurance for adequate cover should you ever need it.

Whilst we take responsibility for the upkeep and repair of all public sewers within the North West, blockages can occur and cause significant inconvenience for you and your customers. It is also important to note that the responsibility for highway drainage assets and gullies is the responsibility of local authorities.

We run various campaigns across our region to ensure customers understand how they can help avoid blockages by controlling what they discharge into the public sewer. Please make sure you are aware of the legislation regarding trade effluent discharges, and also make sure that you and any employees are familiar with what items are acceptable for discharge to the public sewer in order to help reduce unwanted blockages on our network. You can find out more about this on our website here: unitedutilities.com/help-and-support/wastewater-services/stop-the-block/thinkbeforeyoupour/

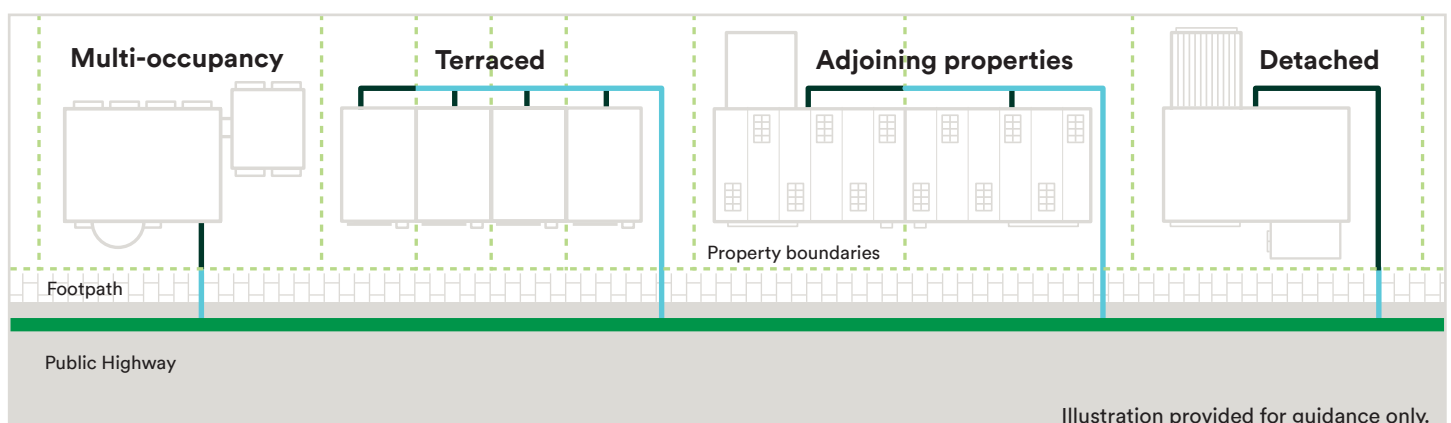


Illustration provided for guidance only.

Key

- Private drain (responsibility of customer)
- Shared sewer pipe/pipe beyond the property boundary (responsibility of United Utilities if the property was constructed and connected to the public sewer prior to 1st July 2011)
- Public sewer (responsibility of United Utilities)

Our wastewater services

Trade Effluent

Trade effluent is wastewater derived from a trade or industrial process which is not domestic sewage (toilet, sink or bath waste).

If your business involves the manufacture or processing of materials such as chemicals, metal finishing, food and drink manufacture, or even if you operate a car wash or launderette, and you discharge wastewater into our public sewer, then it is likely that the discharge is considered trade effluent.

In order to discharge trade effluent to the public sewer you will require a 'trade effluent consent' and it is a legal requirement for trade effluent discharges to be agreed with us. Trade effluent control applies to all businesses, from independent traders to large multi-national companies. Even small discharges of only a few litres a day may require consent.

The disposal of groundwater during land remediation projects if discharged to foul sewer also requires our permission.

If you want to know more you can read our useful guide here:
unitedutilities.com/globalassets/documents/pdf/trade-effluent-information-pack_acc16.pdf

If you believe that you may need to discharge trade effluent and require consent to discharge into the public sewer please contact your retailer who will assist you in completing the relevant application form.

Spillages on your site

In the event of a spillage of chemicals, product or trade waste at your premises, you'll need to take action quickly in order to prevent or minimise any discharge to the sewerage network.

You should have an Incident Management Procedure in place which all your employees should be familiar with, in addition, site drainage plans and Material Safety Data Sheets should be readily available for viewing.

If there has been a spillage please take the following actions:



As far as possible, please prevent the spilled material from entering any drains on site. If any spilled material passes into the site drainage system, please contact us immediately by calling: 0345 672 3723.

Trade effluent control applies to all businesses, from independent traders to large multi-national companies.



Our standards of service

Standards of service

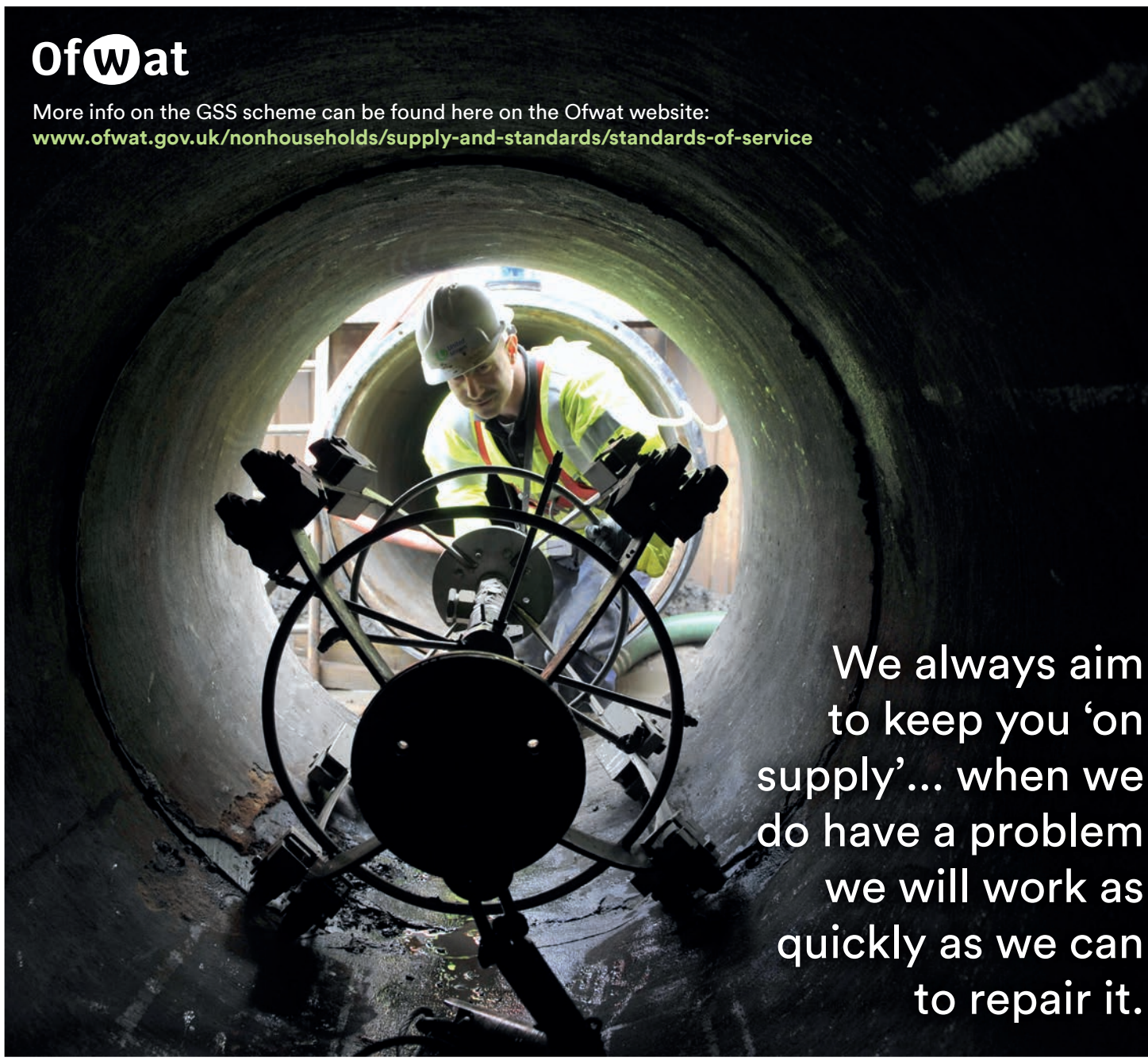
Of course, we always aim to keep you 'on supply', but when we do have a problem we will work as quickly as we can to repair it. However, even with the best will in the world things can go wrong on occasions.

You are entitled to a guaranteed minimum standards of service, as set out by the Government. These rights are known as the guaranteed standards scheme (GSS) and is set out in the Water Supply and Sewerage Services (Customer Service Standards) Regulations 2008 (as amended). Where we fail to meet any of these standards of service then we will make a specified compensation payment to you. Ofwat, the Water Industry Regulator monitors the scheme and sets minimum penalty charges.

Your retailer is responsible for passing GSS payments to you when they are due.



More info on the GSS scheme can be found here on the Ofwat website:
www.ofwat.gov.uk/nonhouseholds/supply-and-standards/standards-of-service

A photograph showing a worker in a hard hat and high-visibility vest operating a large circular valve or pump inside a tunnel. The worker is positioned in the center of the frame, looking down at the equipment. The tunnel walls are dark and textured. The lighting is focused on the worker and the equipment, creating a strong contrast with the dark surroundings.

We always aim to keep you 'on supply'... when we do have a problem we will work as quickly as we can to repair it.

Further information

Useful links

Further reading and information on the water retail market for business customers and the wider industry can be found at the following sites:



Ofwat

The Water Services Regulation Authority, or Ofwat, is the body responsible for economic regulation of the privatised water and sewerage industry in England and Wales.

www.ofwat.gov.uk



Open Water

A website with information about the competitive water retail market and the retailers who provide services to business customers

www.open-water.org.uk



Water UK

A trade association which represents the water companies of the United Kingdom

www.water.org.uk



WRAS

Water Regulation Advisory Scheme - information regarding your obligations under the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations

www.wras.co.uk

Who to contact

For non-urgent queries, including questions about your bill, your retailer will be your first point of contact and you should contact them direct.

We've provided a list of some of the most popular queries and who you should contact for advice.

Contact United Utilities

0345 672 3723

- No supply/high or low pressure
- Leaks – external or internal on a UU asset or meter
- Water quality issues
- Wastewater blockages
- Wastewater flooding of your property
- Odour or pollution concerns
- Works disturbance (water or wastewater)
- Dangerous occurrences – missing manhole covers or lids, sunken chambers etc.

Contact your retailer

Their contact details can be found on a recent water bill

- Queries about your bill
- Non urgent water and sewerage queries
- Questions about your meter
- Temporary or permanent disconnections
- Trace and locate a supply
- Trade effluent consent applications
- Claims for GSS compensation



If you have an emergency with your water supply or wastewater services you should always call **United Utilities** on **0345 672 3723**.



Water for the North West

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