

# About your bill

Your  
charges  
explained



**Wessex Water**  
YTL GROUP

FOR YOU. FOR LIFE.

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# Introduction

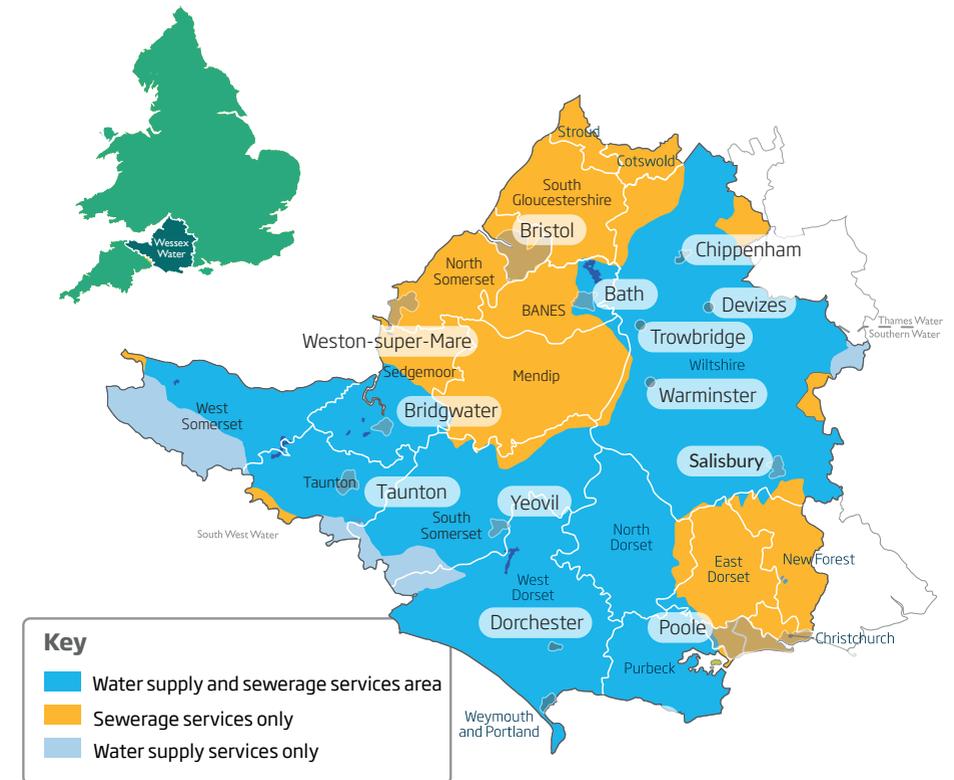
Each year we set our charges according to price limits that we agree with Ofwat, the water industry's regulator, every five years.

The last of these reviews was in 2019 when prices were set for the period between 2020 and 2025.

This leaflet explains more about Ofwat's price limits, how you are charged and where the money goes.

You'll find more detailed information in our charges scheme, visit [wessexwater.co.uk/our-charges](https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/our-charges) or call 0345 600 3 600 for a copy.

## The Wessex Water region



# Charges 2023-24

Our metered charges from 1 April 2023 are:

Meter size	Water supply		Sewerage		
	Standing charge per annum	Volumetric charge per cubic metre	Full standing charge per annum	Abated standing charge* per annum	Volumetric charge per cubic metre
<25mm	£27	£2.2667	£63	£38	1.8301

WaterSure		
	Water supply	Sewerage
Charge per annum	233	225

\* The abated poundage charge is payable (instead of the full standing charge) where no part of the property is connected for surface water drainage.

Our unmetered charges from 1 April 2023 are:

	Water supply	Sewerage
<b>Standing charge</b> per annum	£8	£8
<b>Poundage charge</b> per £ of RV of the property		
Full	£2.1937	£1.7911
Abated*	-	£1.6414
Thames Water area**	-	£1.8376
Abated Thames Water area*	-	£1.6879
Garden sprinklers and similar unattended devices per annum***	£132	-

\* The abated poundage charge is payable (instead of the full standing charge) where no part of the property is connected for surface water drainage.

\*\* No Sewerage standing charge will be made in the Thames Water area.

\*\*\* We require sprinkler users to be metered where possible.

## How you're charged

There are two ways we can charge you for water and/or sewerage services.

One is based on the rateable value (RV) of your property (unmetered charging) and the other depends on how much water you use (metered charging) - this is measured using a water meter.

All household customers have the

option to ask for a meter to be installed free of charge.

If you live on your own, have a small family, live in a house with a high rateable value, or have low water use, you could pay less on a meter. 70% of our customers are on a meter and now only pay for what they use.

## How the charges are set

Our customers are a very important part of our process for setting charges. We consult with them at length and take their views into account in our five-yearly business plan. There's more information on pages 8 and 9 about where we are investing.

Our economic regulator, Ofwat, then examines our plan and sets a price formula that enables us to put the plan into practice while limiting increases in our charges each year.

Within these limits, we may need to change individual charges by different amounts so that charges to customers are fair in reflecting the cost of the services. For example, this means that the increase in unmetered charges can be less or more than those for metered services.

Since 2015 Ofwat has said that if we receive more income than we had expected - for example, if a dry summer prompts customers in metered properties to use more water in their gardens - the following year we have to return that extra amount to customers through slightly lower bills than we had planned. This year charges are increasing by around 9% and this is driven by high inflation. We appreciate this might be a challenge to some of our customers in light of the cost-of-living crisis. If you are struggling to pay your bill, or think you might struggle, please don't worry, we can help you. We provide more information about the support we offer on pages 6 and 7 or visit: [wessexwater.co.uk/help-to-pay](https://wessexwater.co.uk/help-to-pay)

## The difference between metered and unmetered charges

We make sure that the difference between metered and unmetered bills reflects the difference in the cost of providing these services. By using the average amount of water that an unmetered household would use, we calculate what an average household's bill would be if it was paying on a metered basis. This is then compared with the actual average unmetered bill.

This difference is around £105 per year for water bills and £60 for sewerage bills.

Metered charges take into account the extra cost of metering including the maintenance, replacement and reading of the meter and costs of sending two bills every year instead of one. Despite this the metered average bill is lower than unmetered because metered customers use less water on average than unmetered.

When comparing metered and unmetered bills, you must look at the overall bill and not just the separate elements. It is not appropriate to make direct comparisons between one element of a bill for unmetered and metered, as they do not cover the same services.

# Metered customers

## Metered charges – charging for the water you use

If you have a meter your water charges depend on the amount of water you use.

Water supplies to new homes will be metered as no rateable value exists for these properties. We also aim to install water meters on properties which are currently unmetered when there is an occupier change following a property sale or a new tenancy.

Customers who use a sprinkler or have a swimming pool must also have a metered supply.

Where a metered bill spans a period before and after 1 April 2023, we charge for water used before 1 April at 2022 rates and water used after that date at 2023 rates. We assume that use is consistent throughout the entire billing period. Sewerage charges, where applicable, are applied on the same basis.

Sewerage is normally charged on the assumption that 95% of the water used returns to the sewer.

The 5% allowance covers virtually all household situations, eg, evaporation, car washing, drinking, cooking and all garden related use (including normal

use of hosepipes, sprinklers, paddling pools and hot tub top ups). It also takes into account wet and dry years.

The average UK household uses 130 cubic metres of water per year. The 5% allowance amounts to about 6,500 litres or 1,430 gallons.

If considerably less than 95% of your water use is returned to the sewer, please let us know and we'll find out if you qualify for a reduction in charges.

### Your bill

If you have a water meter you will be billed in arrears, normally twice a year, for the water you have used. Payment is due immediately unless you have a payment arrangement with us. If you have recently had a water meter fitted, your first bill will normally arrive within six months of this date.

### Meter testing

If you think your meter is not recording accurately you can ask for it to be tested. If the results confirm the meter is reading accurately, you will be liable for the cost of the test which will be no more than £70+VAT (total £84).

## Metered standing charges

Your meter connection size determines your standing charges. Meter connection sizes vary. The metered water supply standing charge covers some of the cost of reading the meter, its repair or replacement and billing costs.

The metered sewerage standing charge includes billing costs and the costs associated with the collection and treatment of surface water and highway drainage.

The standing charges are annual fixed charges and each metered bill includes a proportion of the standing charge based on the number of days since the last meter reading.

# Unmetered customers

## Unmetered charges – charging on the basis of your rateable value

If you pay for your water on an unmetered basis, the rateable value of your property is used to calculate your bill. Rateable value was used up to 1990 as the basis of the general rate bill paid to your local council. Values were assessed and changed by the Valuation Office of the Inland Revenue and were based loosely on the rental value of a property.

A number of factors were taken into account when assessing the rental value, including the size of the property, general condition and availability of local services. We don't know exactly how individual values were calculated because it was never our responsibility.

In 1990 the government introduced the community charge (poll tax) and the Valuation Office stopped assessing or changing rateable values. The community charge was replaced by the council tax and the Valuation Office started assessing council tax bands.

Unlike rateable values, these bands are based on the actual value of a property rather than the rental value. The two assessments can't be compared and a

change to the council tax banding does not change a rateable value.

By law water companies have the right to continue using rateable values as the basis of charge. The Valuation Office no longer deals with rateable values and there is no mechanism in place to change them.

It is important to remember that if your water bill is based on the rateable value of your property, it means it is not directly related to your use of water and/or sewerage services. So if you feel your unmetered charge is higher than your water use you can normally have a water meter fitted free of charge.

The single occupier discounts associated with the council tax don't apply to water or sewerage charges, but if you are a low water user a water meter could help you reduce the amount of water you use and lower your bill.

You may find that your neighbour lives in a similar house but the rateable value for each property is different, which means your water and/or sewerage bills will be different too.

## Unmetered standing charges

The unmetered standing charges are the same for both water supply and sewerage. This year because of high inflation we have increased our unmetered standing charge from £7 to 8. Part of this covers the cost of billing as well as an element that reflects some of the fixed costs of providing you with water and/or sewerage services. Each water company decides what proportion of fixed costs to include in its standing charges so standing charges can vary considerably between different companies.

## Your bill

Unmetered customers normally receive one bill each year and the charges are payable in advance because we know the full year's charge right from the start. Council tax works the same way.

Most of our customers spread the cost of their bill with an instalment arrangement. For customers who prefer standard options, payment can be made in full by 1 April

## What if I am struggling to pay?

We understand for some households an increase in their water bill will be hard to afford. If you think you might struggle please don't worry, we can help you with your bill. You might also find you could make savings on your bill by having a meter fitted. We can all save energy and money by using less hot water.

We're already helping customers who are struggling to pay through schemes and payment plans (listed below), and we've made these more widely available.

### Flexible payment plan

If you only need short-term help, a flexible payment plan might be suitable.

### Payment break

If you've had a change of circumstances, such as waiting to hear about a Universal Credit application, you can take a payment break.

### Reduced bill - Assist

If you're in financial difficulty, your water bill can be reduced based on your ability to pay.

### Discount for low income pensioners

If you're a pensioner, you could receive around £60 off your bill if the state pension is your only income or you receive pension credit.

### Debt support scheme - Restart

If you're behind on water bills and are in debt, you can get help.

### Bill cap scheme - Watersure

A limit on the amount you pay, if you receive one of the means-tested benefits or tax credits and either:

- receive child benefit for three or more children under 19 living in your household, or
- have someone in the household with a medical condition that causes them to use more water.

To find out more or apply for support visit [wessexwater.co.uk/help-to-pay](https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/help-to-pay) or call us on 0345 600 3 600.

The following organisations will offer free independent advice.

**Citizens Advice**  
0800 144 8848  
[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

**StepChange**  
0800 138 1111  
[www.stepchange.org](https://www.stepchange.org)

**National Debtline**  
0808 808 4000  
[www.nationaldebtline.org](https://www.nationaldebtline.org)

## Preparing for bill increases

With household bills rising, we thought it would be helpful to explain what's happening with water bills so you can plan.

Every five years the water industry regulator Ofwat sets the amount that can be collected from customers through bills, and the annual price change is linked to inflation. Ofwat uses the November rate for inflation to set prices for the following year.

### How will this affect my bill?

Inflation is the highest it's been in 40 years. As a result, our bills are increasing by around 9% on average from 1 April 2023, which is below inflation.

### How much will my bill go up?

This will vary on whether you have a water meter or not, your consumption and the time of year that you receive your bill (relative to when charges change on 1 April). A two-person household on a water meter will see a bill increase of around £3 per month. A typical household bill for those not on a water meter will increase by around £6 per month. This is for a combined water and sewerage service.

If you have applied for a meter but it was not possible to fit you may be on an Assessed charge. A two-person household receiving both water and sewerage services on Assessed charges will see a bill increase of around £3 per month.



Most households now have a water meter and only pay for what they use.

Customers who have switched to a meter found on average they had been paying £100 more than they needed to on average.

Try out a meter for free, and with our Money Back Guarantee you won't pay more.

# What we do for you

## Wessex Water provides your water and sewerage services.

Every day we supply you with water and take away your sewage and waste water, treating it to a high standard so it can be returned to the environment. But that's not all we do...

### Your tap water is clean, safe and ready to drink

Your water is treated to the highest standard before being pumped to your home. We take daily water samples and test it to make sure it is safe for everyone to use.

### You have a reliable supply of water

Every day we're renewing pipes and fixing leaks to save water. In your area we take care of 7,200 miles of water mains and use modern techniques to identify and fix leaks.

### Always here to help

Sometimes you need to get in touch. But don't worry, if there's a problem we're on hand 24 hours a day to deal with emergencies and to help.

### Saving water helps the environment

We carefully manage our water sources so you have enough water when you need it and at the same time we ensure we don't take any more than we need to from the environment.

### Protecting your rivers, lakes and the sea

By maintaining an underground network of pipes and treating sewage to a high standard we keep local watercourses healthy and free from pollution.

### Looking after your home

We look after sewers and manage waste water to minimise risk of flooding. We're investing in upsizing sewers or building large underground tanks to cope with our growing population.

### Making the most of your waste

During the sewage treatment process we generate renewable energy, which is used to power homes and businesses.

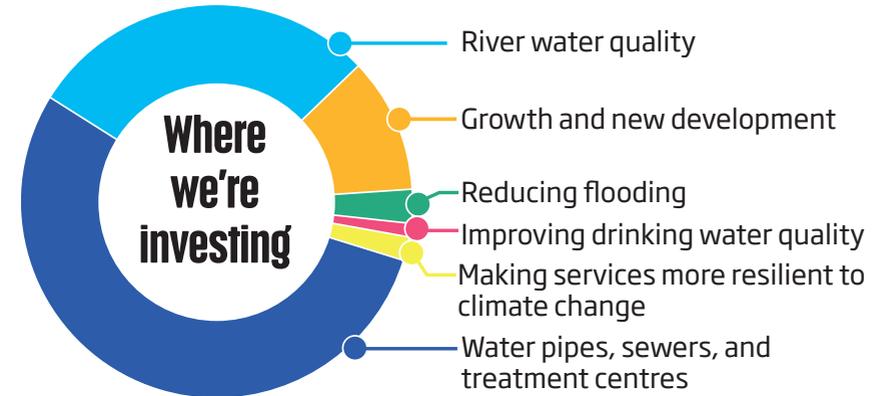
Find out more about what we do at: [wessexwater.co.uk](http://wessexwater.co.uk)

## Where does the money from bills go?

We invest substantially more money than we receive through customer bills. This goes towards maintaining and improving the services we provide, such as renewing ageing water mains and upgrading water recycling centres to meet strict environmental standards. And we're currently spending more than £3 million a month on storm overflows to reduce how often they automatically operate.

The amount we invest is approved and tightly controlled by our regulators. Last year we invested four times as much money as our profit.

You can find out more on our website: [wessexwater.co.uk](http://wessexwater.co.uk)



## How does inflation affect Wessex Water's costs?

Our main costs are power, chemicals, materials and staffing costs. Several of these costs are rising by more than inflation. Wessex Water does not qualify for the government's business support for energy bills.

We recognise with household costs rising rapidly, the timing of water bill increases is not ideal. We have, however, been able to keep bill increases below inflation.

Where we fail to meet our commitments to the services we offer, we return money to customers through lower bills. Similarly, where we've exceeded these commitments, we are rewarded.

Our performance in 2021-22 was industry leading and as a result we were due to be rewarded. To help customers during the immediate cost-of-living crisis, we have agreed with Ofwat to collect the reward at a later date, meaning bills go up less now.

## Our promises

Wessex Water offers customers the best overall guarantees in the industry which apply to our sewerage services, such as sewer flooding, and to customer services. For a full list of our promises visit [wessexwater.co.uk/promises](http://wessexwater.co.uk/promises) or call 0345 600 3 600.

# Common questions

## Why are Wessex Water bills higher than some other water companies?

The cost of water and sewerage services varies around the country because each water and sewerage company works in a different geographical area and to different standards of service and efficiency. These factors are taken into consideration when Ofwat agrees the overall level of charges that companies can apply.

Our charges are higher than some other water companies because we serve a

largely rural population and the cost of getting water to rural areas is high. We also have some of the highest quality and service standards in the industry.

## Why are unmetered charges billed in advance?

Originally charges were collected by local authorities who provided sewerage and/or water services. They charged in advance in the same way that the council tax is now billed. While we continue to bill in advance, customers can choose to take advantage of different payment options to spread the cost of the bill over the year.

## Can I have a water meter?

Most households now have a water meter and only pay for what they use.

Customers who have switched to a meter found on average they had been paying £100 more than they needed to on average.

Try out a meter for free, and with our Money Back Guarantee you won't pay more\*.

Apply online at [wessexwater.co.uk/meter](https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/meter) or call us on 0345 600 3 600. Bournemouth Water supply customers should call 01202 590 059.

\*You can go back to unmeasured charges if you ask within 30 days of getting the second bill in year two and we'll refund or credit the difference.

\*\*You can go back at any time during the first two years, but you won't be eligible for the Guarantee.\*\*



We offer a money back guarantee to all customers who swap to a meter. We're confident you will save money, but if you don't after two years with a meter, you can return to unmetered charges and we'll credit your account with any overpayments.\*\*

## Why do I have to pay standing charges?

Standing charges for metered customers contribute towards the cost of reading the meter, its repair or replacement and billing costs. Some of these costs are recovered through the water supply standing charge and the rest through the sewerage standing charge. We recover the costs of dealing with surface water and highway drainage with fixed charges because these costs bear no relation to the volume of water used. The unmetered standing charges are the same for water supply and sewerage and part covers the cost of billing and the fixed costs of providing you with water and/or sewerage services.

## What if I receive water or sewerage services from another water company?

If you are on the boundary of the Wessex Water area and receive your water supply from us and sewerage services from another water company, you will receive two separate bills. If you have a water meter, we will share your meter readings with the relevant company. Your sewerage charges will be billed in relation to the volume of water used.

If you receive your water supply from Bournemouth Water or Cholderton and District Water and we provide your sewerage services you will receive two separate bills. If you have a water meter, we will base your sewerage charges on the information provided by your water supply company.

## I am moving home. What should I do?

If you have a meter we will need a reading taken on the day you move. You can let us know online at [wessexwater.co.uk/moving](https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/moving) or call us on 0345 600 3 600.

If you have difficulty reading your meter, please give us five working days' notice and we will take your final meter reading.

We now aim to install water meters on properties which are currently unmetered when there is an occupier change following a property sale or a new tenancy.

## Do I have to pay charges if I am renovating my property?

Yes. If you are using water full charges are payable. If you don't have a meter you can choose to have one and just pay for what you use.

## Your comments

If you have any comments or complaints about the services we provide, our core customer information for complaints shows how you can get in touch.

If you are unhappy with the response you receive, you can then contact CCW - the voice for water consumers, the independent customer watchdog or, in some cases, the Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat). For more information visit: [wessexwater.co.uk/complaints](https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/complaints)

[www.ccwater.org.uk](http://www.ccwater.org.uk) and [www.ofwat.gov.uk](http://www.ofwat.gov.uk) or call 0345 600 3 600 for a leaflet.

# Reduction of your sewerage bill

You pay a charge for rainwater draining from your roof to the sewer. Rainwater can overwhelm some sewers during intense rainfall and result in storm overflows operating.

Save around £25 off your bill by disconnecting downpipes, storing rainwater in a waterbutt and distributing any surplus rainwater across your garden or into a soakaway.

To claim you must prove that:

- the majority of rainfall from your roof or shared roof drains into a soakaway at the front and rear of your property
- the majority of rainfall from your garden, drive, patio or yard runs off into the ground.

Your claim will be unsuccessful if:

- you use a water butt but have no soakaways
- rainwater from your roof runs indirectly to a sewer, eg, across a pavement, driveway or hard-paved areas.

A soakaway is where water from your roof, etc, is piped to a form of underground concrete or plastic chamber, tank or simple pit filled with stone or gravel, within or outside the boundary of the property, or shared with adjacent properties and normally at least three to four metres (10 to 15 feet) away from the house foundations.

Most properties are connected to a public sewer and are not entitled to the allowance.

## It's free to make a claim

Visit: [wessexwater.co.uk/surface-water-drainage](http://wessexwater.co.uk/surface-water-drainage) or call 0345 600 3 600 to request a leaflet.

## Tell us what you think for a chance to win £200!

We're always striving to improve our service, and the only way we can do this is by listening to our customers' opinions and needs.

Join our online customer research panel to tell us what you think of our services, how you feel we could improve and help us plan for the future.

Sign up today and you will be entered into a draw to win £200 every time you complete a new survey.

Visit [wessexwater.co.uk/have-your-say](http://wessexwater.co.uk/have-your-say)

# Helping the environment

If you have a meter every drop of water you save will save you money.

Reducing your hot water use can help you make substantial savings on your energy bill too.



## Shorter showers

Around 40% of your daily water use is from showering. Try taking shorter showers, turning down the flow rate, turn off when you lather or jump in the shower straight away. By taking these actions a family of 4 can save £150 per year!



## Wash on full loads

Washing machines use around 50 litres of water per load. Make sure you have full loads and get another wear out of items before they go in the laundry basket. This could save you



## Fix any leaky loos

Save water and money by checking and fixing your leaky toilet! By fixing a leaking toilet, you could save £400 per year.



## FREE for you

GetWaterFit is our handy water calculator that can help you save water, save money on your household bills and claim FREE water saving devices. Try it out at [wessexwater.co.uk/get-water-fit](http://wessexwater.co.uk/get-water-fit)

# Contact us

## Questions about your bill

- Payment arrangements • Metering • Moving house • Problems paying
- High water use • Priority Services

**0345 600 3 600** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm; Saturday, 9am to 1pm)

Submit an online enquiry via our website: [wessexwater.co.uk/contact-us](https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/contact-us)

**Write to:** Wessex Water, 1 Clevedon Walk, Nailsea, Bristol BS48 1WA  
**wessexwater.co.uk**

## Automated billing telephone services

**0345 600 6 600** when connected PRESS:

- 1 Meter option leaflet
- 2 Surface water drainage leaflet
- 3 Charges explained leaflet
- 4 Submit meter reading after an estimated bill
- 5 Information on rateable value charging

## Questions about your water supply or sewerage

- Loss of supply • Leak • Water quality problem • Sewage flooding
- Blocked sewer

**0345 600 4 600** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm, emergencies only at other times)

Submit an online enquiry via our website: [wessexwater.co.uk/contact-us](https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/contact-us)

Bournemouth Water customers with enquiries about their water supply, billing or metering should call 01202 590 059.

This leaflet forms part of our core customer information, covering key aspects of our work including leakage, enquiries and complaints. All these leaflets can be found at [wessexwater.co.uk/cop](https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/cop) or contact us.

We welcome calls via the Relay UK Service.

*Calls to 0345 numbers from UK landlines cost no more than calls to standard UK landline numbers. If you're calling from a mobile please check with your service provider as sometimes calls can cost more. We may record telephone calls into our contact centres for quality, security and training purposes.*



**Wessex Water**  
YTL GROUP

FOR YOU. FOR LIFE.