

Advice on Tap

Age UK Devon have been working in partnership with South West Water since July 2012 to help older people make informed choices and decisions about their water usage.

Our Information and Advice Team and Volunteer Advocates have received training enabling them to promote and highlight the potential financial benefits of switching to a water meter, and give information about the company's support schemes available to customers who may be struggling to pay their bills.



The high water bills in the South West compared to the rest of the UK, has been one of the biggest issues in the region in the last 20 years. Finally, after years of campaigning the Government confirmed a £50 reduction on our household bills from April 2013.

Here are the top five things you need to know about the reduction:

1. The reduction is for billed household customers whose homes are within South West Waters service area.
2. it's a flat rate reduction of £50 per year - it's not linked to how much water you use
3. The reduction starts from April 2013 and will run every year to at least 2020
4. It will be automatically deducted from bills - look out for the line 'Government Contribution' on your bills from 2013/14
5. None of the government funding will be retained by South West Water and the company will not profit in any way.

It's your money. Could you save it by having a water meter fitted?



Did you know – each year 20,000 people in Devon and Cornwall save an average of £450 per household on their water bill by having a meter fitted. Our advisors can help you to find out if your household could save money by switching to a meter, discuss any concerns you may have about making the switch and help you to complete the necessary forms, if necessary.

Paying your bills....

We know that for some older people, it can be a struggle to manage finances - often only by cutting back on food or social activities is it possible to make ends meet.



If you are having difficulties, our advisors can make sure you are claiming all your financial entitlements by completing a full income maximization check and will make sure that you are on the most appropriate tariff for your water charges. We may even be able to offer a home visit to help you complete any relevant forms.

Help if you aren't managing to pay your water bill...



If you have difficulties paying, please do not ignore it.

Contact the South West Water Debt Helpline on 0800 083 0283 as there are a number of different options that may be available such as:

- WaterCare+ is a free scheme to help customers pay their bills as well as give advice on how to save water and energy
- If you're eligible for WaterCare+ and need extra help paying off your water bill then the Restart scheme can look at writing off some of the arrears if you make regular payments. Over time, your arrears will disappear and you are left with a payment plan that works
- The FreshStart Fund provides time and financial assistance for South West Water customers who are new to debt or dealing with an extraordinary life event, such as the death of a partner, and for whom immediate clearance of water debt or short-term help with bills would be beneficial. This fund is financed by South West Water and administered by Plymouth Citizens Advice Bureau. Call 01752 507710 or 01752 507704

Fact file. Did you know that...?

If you're the sole occupier in a non-metered property and you go into hospital, a nursing or residential home, for between one and 12 months, you may be eligible for a reduced fixed charge for your water and sewerage.

That you can register for Priority services, which will benefit you if:

- you have specific health issues that could be affected by disruptions to your water supply
- you would prefer your bill in an alternative format such as large print.
- you are unable to read your meter

The WaterSure scheme can help if you receive certain state benefits and you're on a water meter and you, or someone living in your household, has a medical condition which causes extra water to be used, that you may be entitled to pay a reduced charge for your water.

To find out more please call South West Water on 0800 169 1133 or Minicom 0800 169 9965

Health on Tap

Many older people rely on health care professionals and relatives to advise, support and care for them. They may not realise that keeping hydrated can help prevent urinary infections, ease or prevent constipation and the indignity that accompanies it, and combat the dizziness that may cause potentially fatal falls.

According to the Government's Drinking Water inspectorate the water that comes out of taps within the South West Water service area is one of the highest standards in the country at 99.98% compliant. So there has never been a better time to drink lots of water!

Water Facts:

- one in four people don't drink enough water and believe that other drinks, like tea, coffee or beer, are adequate substitutes. There is no substitute for water. Diuretic drinks might stimulate us temporarily but they do not hydrate our bodies
- drinking seven or eight glasses of water a day is recommended for good health in adults
- water is your body's most important nutrient. You could survive for about a month without food, but only five to seven days without water
- drinking the recommended daily amount of water reduces the risk of developing kidney stones, bladder cancer and urinary infections
- not drinking enough water can result in dehydration, lethargy, headaches and constipation
- more than 75% of our hunger pangs are signs of thirst
- drinking the right amount of water everyday will make you feel and look healthier

