

CONSUMER COUNCIL FOR

CYNGOR DEFNYDDWYR

Water

Dŵr

End of Year Complaints and Enquiries Report

1 April 2014 - 31 March 2015

June 2015

CONSUMER COUNCIL FOR WATER
END OF YEAR REPORT ON CONSUMER COMPLAINTS AND ENQUIRIES
1 April 2014 - 31 March 2015

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Report of: Head of Consumer Relations

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To inform the Board of our complaint and enquiry numbers and comment on our performance and consumer satisfaction achieved during 2014-15.
- 1.2 To identify company complaint trends and to provide information for Chairs, Local Consumer Advocates (LCAs) and staff to discuss identified issues and agreed future actions with local companies.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Board is asked to:
- note the report,
 - use the report information to capitalise on joint working between staff, Chairs and LCAs to challenge or congratulate companies where appropriate, and
 - feedback any key issues arising from the paper to the Head of Consumer Relations for further follow up action, including if further information is required.

3. Report Summary

- 3.1 Customer complaints about water companies increased by 2% from 9,957 in 2013-14 to 10,138 in 2014-15.
- 3.2 When measuring complaints per 10,000 connections, the most complained about companies were South West Water, Southern Water and Anglian Water. Wessex Water received the fewest complaints of any water and sewerage company.
- 3.3 We opened 21 investigations in 2014-15, eight more than in 2013-14. The investigations were of Anglian Water (five investigations), Severn Trent (four investigations), Southern Water (three), Thames Water (three), Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (two), United Utilities (two), Affinity Water (one) and Northumbrian Water (one).
- 3.4 Consumer satisfaction with service, speed and courtesy increased compared to 2013-14. Satisfaction with service was 73% (69% last year) against an operational business plan (OBP) target of 75%, speed was 80% (78% last year) against an OBP target of 80% and courtesy was 93% (92% last year) against an OBP target of 93%. Satisfaction with outcome remained static at 57%, against an OBP target of 61%.
- 3.5 Our performance against the 5-day acknowledgement of complaints target has increased by 0.1 percentage points compared to last year to 99.9% (0.4 points above the OBP target of 99.5%). Our performance in 20-day closures has decreased by 1.1 percentage points to 82.6% (but is still 3.6 points above our OBP target of 79%). Our performance in 40-day closures also decreased, by 1.0 percentage points, to 92.3% (but is still 1.3 points above our OBP target of 91%).
- 3.6 Compared to 2013-14, consumers made fewer complaints about administration and sewerage issues. All other categories saw an increase, the largest of which was “other” complaints, up by 22% (67 complaints across the 2014-15 year). Billing and charges issues account for 52% of all complaints made to CCWater.
- 3.7 There were 102,177 unique consumer visits to our support site in 2014-15. Only 2% of visitors needed to make a complaint or enquiry to us. Most people found the information they required with no impact on our staff resources.
- 3.8 We secured £2.2m of financial redress for consumers in 2014-15. This is just under £500,000 more than in the 2013-14. The redress equates to £226 per complaint handled.
- 3.9 We received seven complaints about our handling that we escalated for review in 2014-15, compared to 21 last year. We completed ten reviews in the year, compared to 22 last year. The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman notified us of two complaints against CCWater that it received; neither complaint was upheld.
- 3.10 We received fewer enquiries in 2014-15 than in 2013-14, down 27% (-2,884 enquiries) from 10,849 to 7,965. All enquiry categories saw a decrease in number, the greatest decrease being in enquiries about charges, which dropped by 43%. Many companies have introduced 03 (00 and 45) enquiry numbers for consumers to call them on. Previously, consumers had often called CCWater’s geographical 01 telephone numbers to avoid the charges from mobile telephones to 08 numbers. As the introduction of 03 numbers allowed these consumers to contact their company directly without incurring excessive call costs, the decrease in enquiries was not unexpected, although more pronounced than we had envisaged.

4. Company actions, policy changes, hot topics and issues identified by CCWater

4.1 Company Updates - Quarter four (January - March 2015)

This section (4.1) applies to the last quarter of the 2014-15 year (January - March 2015) only. Details of company updates throughout the rest of the year are available in the previous quarterly Board reports.

4.1.1 Anglian Water

- Last quarter we stated that Anglian had reported 2.3m customers' details to Experian. CCWater committed to monitor the level of complaints generated by this action and to work with the company to better understand the process.
 - Since October 2014 (the start of Q3) we have recorded 38 complaints about Anglian Water reporting consumer details to Experian. This is around 6% of all complaints we received about the company in the period. Following subsequent discussion between us about the credit reporting process, we now better understand how the data is selected and sent to Experian. We are challenging the company when we feel the consumer details reported are not accurate. In the majority of cases the reporting is accurate but the consumer is unhappy about the effect the reporting of late payments has on their credit file and subsequent access to credit.
- Anglian Water will remove its SoLow tariff in April 2015. This social tariff has been available to metered, low usage consumers - it has a slightly higher price per cubic meter for water and sewerage but has no standing charges. Instead, the company will offer a tariff called Lite; available to consumers who are deemed to be financially vulnerable, as assessed by the CAB. A discount will be given on the metered bill, determined according to individual circumstances.
 - CCWater knows that not all people currently on SoLow will be eligible for Lite. The company has trialled revoking the SoLow tariff with a group of consumers who were most affected and it did not result in a significant increase in contact. Another 85,000 customers received notification letters informing them of the withdrawal of the tariff, which has resulted in an increase in contact to CCWater and to Anglian. CCWater recommended the tariff change over is phased in over a five year period, Anglian Water has agreed to phase it in over a three year period. CCWater is currently working with Anglian to clearly explain to customers why the phase out of the tariff is necessary, explaining if needed how much the cross subsidy costs other consumers.

4.1.2 Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water

- Last quarter we reported that CCWater had identified cases where the company had classified letters as general correspondence instead of complaints.
 - CCWater visited the company in January and audited around 50 cases. Of these, all but two had been classified correctly. We are content that the problem was down to human error and not systemic and wilful under-recording of complaints. A more detailed note of the audit is available [here](#). The findings have been reported to the Welsh Committee.
- The new billing system implementation was delayed from October to November 2014 and then again to January 2015. Consequently, CCWater's full details were not included on the back of the 2014-15 bills or the 2015-16 April bills.
 - The new system has been implemented and is now more stable. Dŵr Cymru is now reviewing its back of bill information. CCWater has reminded the company of its commitment to include our full details.
- There have been some data migration issues with the company's new billing system. This has resulted in some errors, mostly affecting around 200 Direct Debits and some payment book customers. The company contacted customers affected and rectified the issue.
 - Complaint levels are a standing item on the agenda when CCWater meets with Dŵr Cymru. The company dealt with the issues well and there has been no increase in written complaint numbers. No further action.

4.1.3 Severn Trent Water

- Last quarter we reported that changes are being made to the company structure. Personnel at complaint management level will be affected; potentially CCWater could lose one of its two main contacts.

- A new complaint management structure is now in place at Severn Trent. CCWater has met with the new Chief Customer Officer and Head of Consumer Relations to discuss complaint handling and to build a good working relationship for the future. The new structure has given CCWater a new, more senior complaint contact at the company than our previous contact.
- At the end of December, the company sent reminder letters to 1,200 Direct Debit customers saying a payment was overdue. The affected customers were due to make a payment on 25/26 December, but due to the holiday period the next working day was 29 December, leading to the reminder being issued despite the fact that the Direct Debit could not have been taken earlier. The company contacted all affected consumers by SMS text message where possible and sent apology letters.
 - No CCWater action needed.
- The company will add a section to its scheme of charges from April 2015 to say if it cannot access a meter to take a reading it will bill people according to the assessed charge.
 - CCWater's policy team, regional Chair and Consumer Relations Manager have discussed this with the company at length and are satisfied that this will only be used as a last resort. We will monitor the situation to ensure this is the case.

4.1.4 Southern Water

- Complaints about Southern Water to CCWater continue to rise.
 - CCWater met the company's new Chief Customer Officer in January. She was wholly aware of the problems and a very frank discussion was had. CCWater is confident that the company has plans to address the increasing complaint numbers. We will continue to monitor the problem and review progress with the company.

4.1.5 South West Water

- The company is developing a survey to ascertain why consumers contact CCWater despite having had their complaint or enquiry addressed by the company, or in some cases rather than contacting the company at all. This will be a follow-up survey to the in-house work the company conducted in 2013.
 - CCWater is working with the company to develop the survey and we will be kept informed of the implementation, results and subsequent actions arising from it.

4.1.6 Thames Water

- Last quarter we reported that progressive metering had almost been completed in the first area across which the programme was rolled out. Problems had been encountered with the contractor, so the second area would not be started until these had been resolved. Issues have since been resolved.
 - The company aims to install 40,000 smart meters in 2015-16, which will automatically transmit readings. The first stage of the work is to install meter chambers, make necessary pipework alterations and to make sure the communications technology is in place to enable the smart meters to work most efficiently. This work is underway. Customers are being given four weeks notice of the street works, with a reminder one week before the start date. A card is left after the works are completed, which contains advice on running the water until it is clear. When all of this work is complete meters will be installed.
 - CCWater will be kept up to date on the progression of the metering programme.

4.1.7 United Utilities

- In quarter two, we reported that at a complaint assessment, CCWater found several instances where Advantis (a debt collection agency) had responded to complaints about debt recovery. Letters were not to UU style and did not appear to offer the same resolutions as UU would offer its customers. CCWater has asked for either UU to do the letters or for Advantis to have to adhere to UU standards and receive same training.
 - United Utilities has promised a full review of the matter, CCWater awaiting an update.

4.1.8 Welsh Government

- Welsh Government has enacted legislation requiring landlords to inform water companies of tenants details or face being jointly liable for debt.
 - CCWater has asked Dŵr Cymru to give an update on the effect of this enactment at the next public meeting in September 2015.

4.1.9 Complaints Action Log

Our companies action log, updated by Consumer Relations Managers (CRM), can be found [here](#). This action log is regularly updated by our CRMs and is a useful resource for Chairs, LCAs and Policy Mangers to use, especially prior to company meetings, to confirm any issues identified by the teams and any actions promised by companies to rectify them. Chairs and LCAs are also encouraged to update the log where they see fit, as well as reporting any actions or updates identified in company meetings to the Consumer Relations team directly.

4.2 Complaint and Debt Assessments

CCWater has undertaken seven debt assessments and seven complaint assessments of companies in 2014-15. A report detailing the findings of these assessments will be written and published in the public domain at a later date. A link to our assessment report will be provided at that time.

4.3 Policy and substantial changes throughout 2014-15

- 4.3.1 A tenant moved out of his rented accommodation in November but did not provide Dee Valley Water with a final meter read. The next tenant did not move in to the premises until April. Dee Valley charged the first tenant for usage up to the read taken by the second tenant in April and for the standing charges across the five-month period. The company explained that this was its policy when dealing with tenanted properties. CCWater challenged the company, explaining that whilst the first tenant may not have given a meter reading, he had provided evidence that he had vacated the property. The company agreed to cancel the standing charges for the period and to only charge him his average daily usage for the time he was in the property. Because of this, the company reviewed and subsequently changed the way it deals with tenanted properties.
- 4.3.2 A customer complained that United Utilities had been charging her for surface water drainage despite her rain water draining into an unadopted sewer and then into a water course. She argued that as neither the sewer nor the watercourse was the company's asset she had no reason to be paying the charge for the upkeep of the network or treatment of the water. CCWater agreed with the customer and took the argument forward with United Utilities. Consequently, Untied Utilities changed its policy for charging surface water drainage in this situation. It also made the policy change retrospective, offering householders affected rebates back to 1997. Furthermore, the company then went on to proactively identify affected consumers throughout its area, resulting in over £500,000 of rebates being given to consumers.
- 4.3.3 Yorkshire Water agreed to improve its policy for charging unoccupied household premises. Previously, the company would levy charges if the house was unoccupied but furnished. It revised the policy and agreed to not charge an empty premises even if it was fully furnished.

5. Complaints

5.1 Complaint Numbers

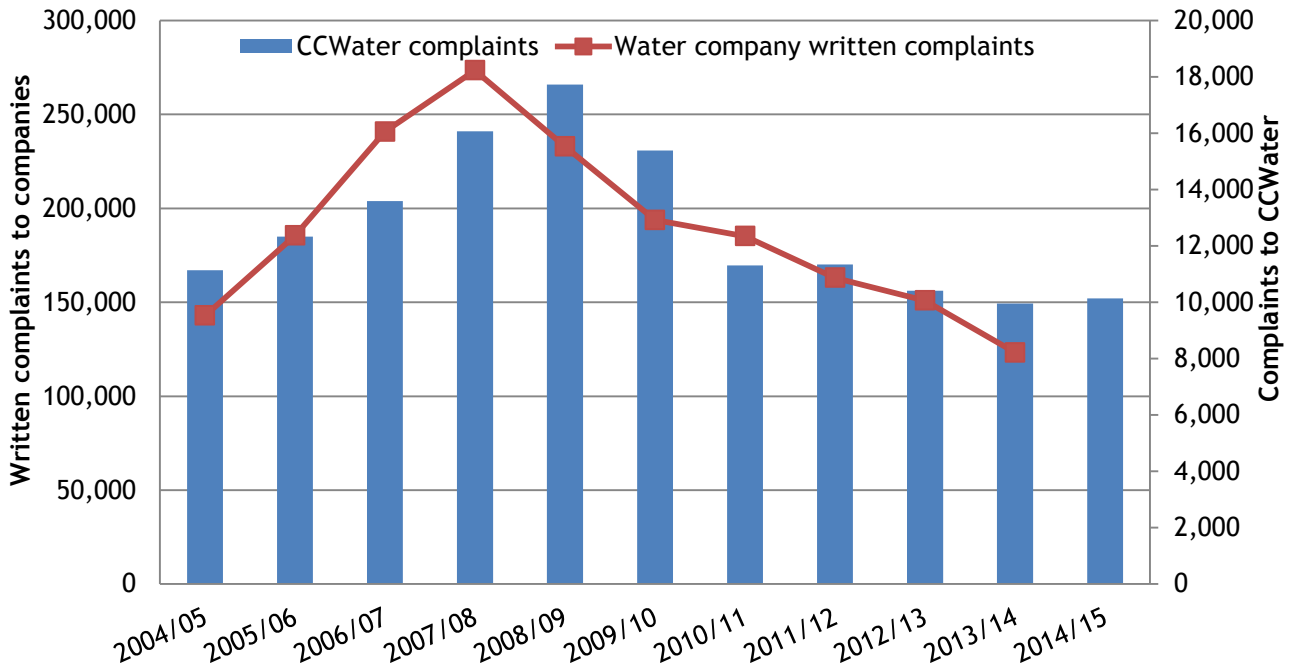
5.1.1 Table 1 shows that the total complaints we received against companies in 2014-15 (10,138) increased by 2% compared to 2013-14 (9,957). A breakdown by complaint category is shown in chart 4 at 5.3.1.

Table 1: Complaints about companies

Company	2013-14	2014-15	Total	% change
Water and Sewerage Companies				
Northumbrian Water	267	142	-125	-47%
Wessex Water	166	136	-30	-18%
South West Water	743	627	-116	-16%
Thames Water	2,151	1,835	-316	-15%
Yorkshire Water	447	412	-35	-8%
Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water	418	397	-21	-5%
United Utilities	1,114	1,065	-49	-4%
Severn Trent Water	1,012	1,129	117	12%
Anglian Water	1,139	1,286	147	13%
Southern Water	990	1,535	545	55%
Water Only Companies				
Cholderton and District Water Company	2	0	-2	-100%
South East Water	465	333	-132	-28%
Dee Valley Water	45	33	-12	-27%
Cambridge Water	28	22	-6	-21%
Sutton and East Surrey Water	61	56	-5	-8%
Essex & Suffolk Water	168	162	-6	-4%
Sembcorp Bournemouth Water	25	25	0	0%
Bristol Water	89	97	8	9%
Portsmouth Water	17	19	2	12%
Hartlepool Water	6	7	1	17%
Affinity Water	247	294	47	19%
South Staffs Water	98	171	73	74%
Other				
Peel Water Networks	1	0	-1	-100%
SSE Water/Swalec	3	3	0	0%
Independent Water Networks	5	6	1	20%
Non-company	190	256	66	35%
Do not know company	60	86	26	43%
Veolia Water Projects	1	3	2	200%
TOTAL	9,957	10,138	181	2%

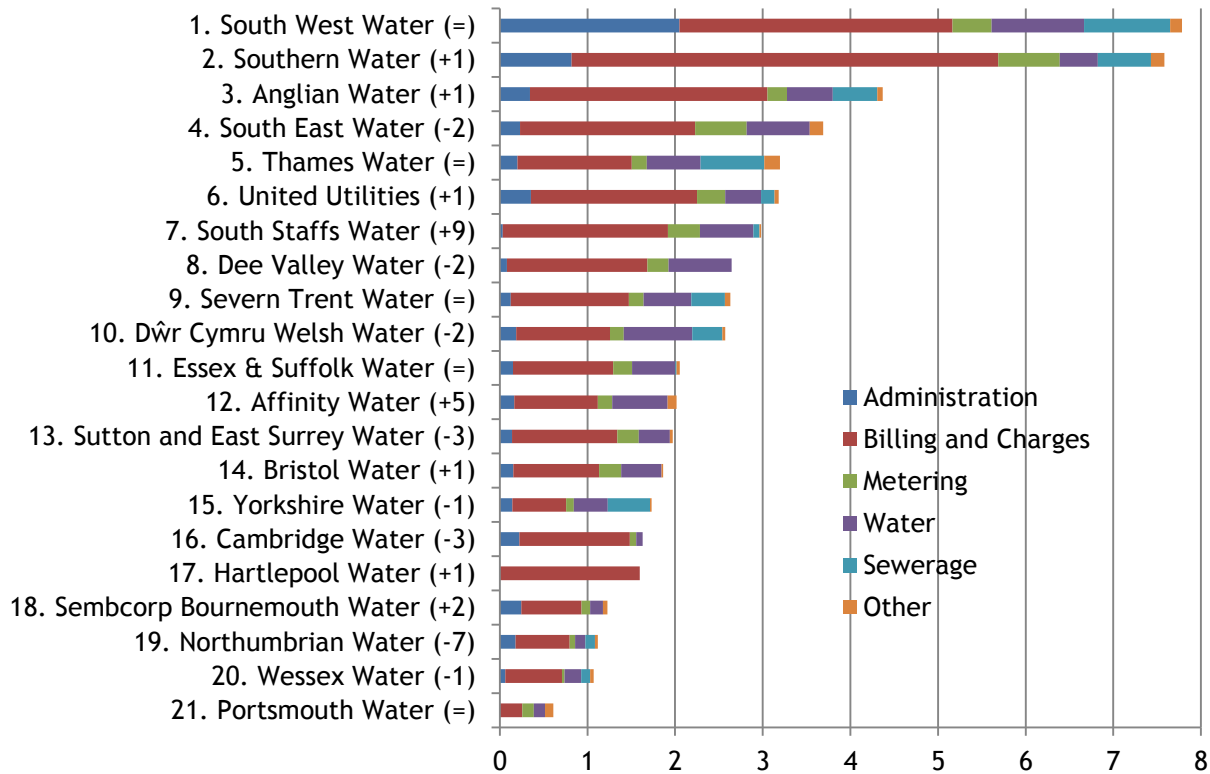
5.1.2 Chart 1 shows all complaints to CCWater and written complaints to the industry. Complaints to CCWater decreased sharply for two years after 2008-09, but have subsequently levelled off to around 10,000 complaints per year, which may represent a core level of industry complaints. Companies will tell us in July how many written complaints they had in 2014-15. We expect to publish our cross-company comparison in September's Written Complaints to the Industry report.

Chart 1: Historical complaints to CCWater and water company written complaints



5.1.3 Chart 2 shows complaints to CCWater per 10,000 connections. We denote companies that performed comparatively worse this year compared to last year by (+) and companies that improved by (-).

Chart 2: Consumer complaints to CCWater per 10,000 company connections



5.1.4 South West Water remains the most complained about company when looking at complaints per 10,000 connections. The company has seen a decrease in the number of complaints CCWater received about it compared to last year (-16%) but still remains an under-performer, receiving more than double the number of complaints per 10,000 connections than the majority of other companies. The reintroduction of an email address for consumers to contact the company and the migration from 08 to 03 numbers has had a positive

impact on the number of complaints CCWater receives about the company but there is still more work to be done to bring the company into line with its peers. The company is developing a survey (see 4.1.5) to give more insight into why consumers continue to contact CCWater after the company has dealt with their complaint directly. We hope that this, combined with the decreasing complaint trend, will allow South West Water to fall closer into line with other water and sewerage companies over the coming year.

- 5.1.5 Southern Water saw the biggest increase in complaints of any water and sewerage company in 2014-15, which has resulted in it moving up the chart to second place. The company received significantly more complaints per 10,000 connections than the majority of its peers throughout the year. Southern Water attended a Consumer Relations Managers meeting in August 2014 to tell us about the introduction of a new billing system (rolled out that same month), which it believed would drive down complaint numbers. However, the situation has worsened rather than improved, with the company receiving 55% more complaints this year than last year. Our London and South East Consumer Relations Manager met the company's new Chief Customer Officer in January and we are confident that the company is aware of the scale of the problem and has plans to resolve it (see 4.1.4). We will monitor the situation and continue to press the company to act on resolving the number of complaints we receive about it.
- 5.1.6 South Staffordshire Water has moved nine places up the complaints per 10,000 connections chart. This has been an increase of 74%, from 98 complaints in 2013-14 to 171 this year. Looking at the root cause, the increase has been in general billing and charges issues; debt recovery, billing methods, surface water drainage, backdated charges etc. Whilst there is no obvious reason for this increase our Central team has raised this issue with the company and will monitor the situation.
- 5.1.7 Table 2 shows the five companies with the largest reduction in complaints to CCWater per 10,000 connections and the five companies with the largest increase alongside the complaint category that saw the largest change.

Table 2: Largest increase and decrease in complaints per 10,000 connections

Company	2013-14	2014-15	Reason
Better than last year			
South East Water	5.2	3.7	Biggest decrease in billing and charges
South West Water	9.2	7.8	Biggest decrease in billing and charges
Northumbrian Water	2.1	1.1	Biggest decrease in billing and charges
Dee Valley Water	3.6	2.6	Biggest decrease in billing and charges and administration
Thames Water	3.7	3.2	Biggest decrease in administration
Worse than last year			
Southern Water	4.9	7.6	Biggest increase in billing and charges
South Staffs Water	1.7	3.0	Biggest increase in billing and charges
Anglian Water	3.9	4.4	Biggest increase in billing and charges
Affinity Water	1.7	2.0	Biggest increase in billing and charges
Severn Trent Water	2.4	2.6	Biggest increase in billing and charges

- 5.1.8 Table 3 shows how CCWater distributed complaints across its offices in 2014-15. We share casework across offices so complaint levels with companies are not necessarily reflected in the complaint levels at the associated regional office. Most complaints to head office were transactional issues with no company named. These were not 121 escalated cases.

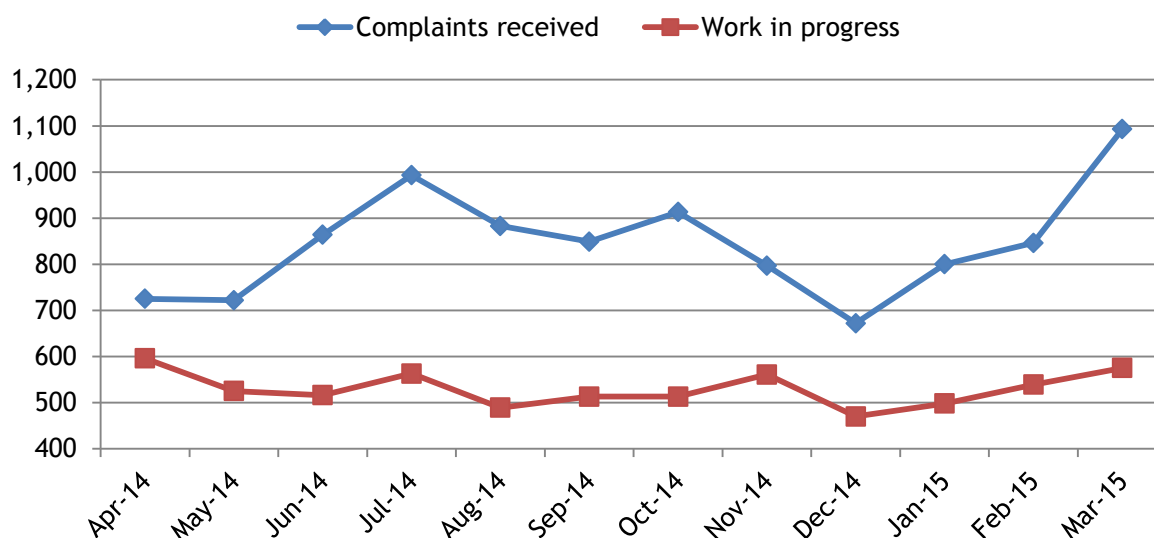
Table 3: Complaints to CCWater offices

Office	2013-14	2014-15	Change	% Change
Wessex	241	-	-241	-100%
Northumbria & Yorkshire	1,158	820	-338	-29%
Eastern	1,279	1,141	-138	-11%
London & South East	2,987	2,696	-291	-10%
Head Office	126	121	-5	-4%
Wales	955	1,005	50	5%
North West	1,011	1,102	91	9%
South West	1,145	1,318	173	15%
Central	1,056	1,934	878	83%
CCWater	9,957	10,138	181	1.8%

5.1.9 No complaints were handled in Wessex (Bristol office) in this year. Our consumer relations team for the region is now based in South West (Exeter office).

5.1.10 Chart 3 shows our profile of new complaints in 2014-15. We saw a seasonal December fall-off in contact and an increase in February and March, which is associated with the main billing period. We also saw an increase in complaints in June and July 2014. This coincided with Ofwat announcing draft price limits for many companies for the 2015-2020 period and Thames Water pledging an £86M package of benefits following Ofwat’s investigation into sewer flooding incidents.

Chart 3: Complaints received and in progress numbers



5.2 Complaint Handling

5.2.1 CCWater handles consumer complaints by:

- **Referring them to the company (referral)**

When a consumer approaches us before their company’s procedure is exhausted, we send their complaint to the company to respond. We add value by requesting to see the company reply and chasing the reply if it is overdue. Paragraph 5.2.3 details how our referral service offers more value than merely acting as a “post box” for consumer complaints.

We then tell the consumer if the company’s explanation or proposed resolution is or is not reasonable. We will escalate the complaint on behalf of the consumer to the next company stage or to a CCWater investigation if necessary.

We clarified with Ofwat that companies should record complaints in the way that we present them to the company. Though we normally use the same method the consumer has used, there are times when a more complicated complaint, even if received by telephone, should be put in writing by CCWater on behalf of the consumer.

- **Investigation**

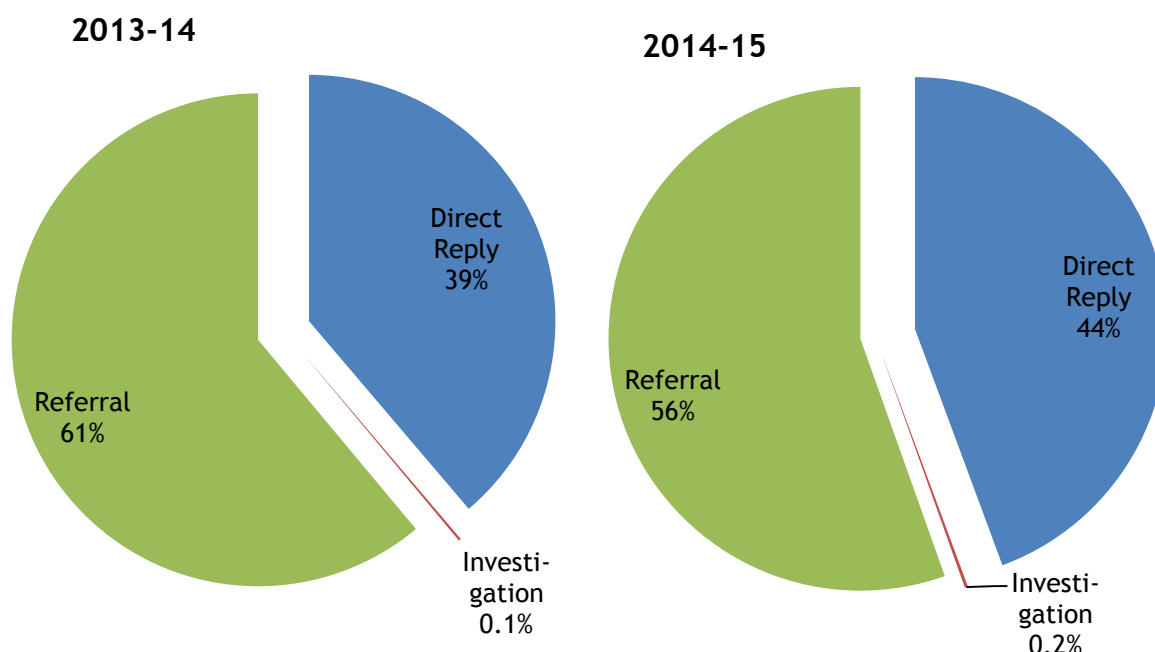
We investigate when the company has had an opportunity to address a consumer complaint through their procedure (usually two stages). We question the company and make recommendations for resolution.

- **Replying directly to the consumer (direct reply)**

We reply directly to the consumer when we can confidently advise that their company has provided an appropriate level of service, a reasonable reply to a complaint, or the issue is about a general regulatory practice that the company cannot resolve. CCWater resolves these complaints quickly by providing accurate information and managing consumers’ expectations from the start, telling consumers why there is no benefit in taking their complaint to the company or us investigating the matter.

5.2.2 In 2014-15, we referred 5,621 complaints to companies, replied directly to 4,497 complaints and investigated 21 complaints. Chart 4 shows that we referred fewer complaints to the company to address in 2014-15 than in 2013-14.

Chart 4: Complaint by handling method

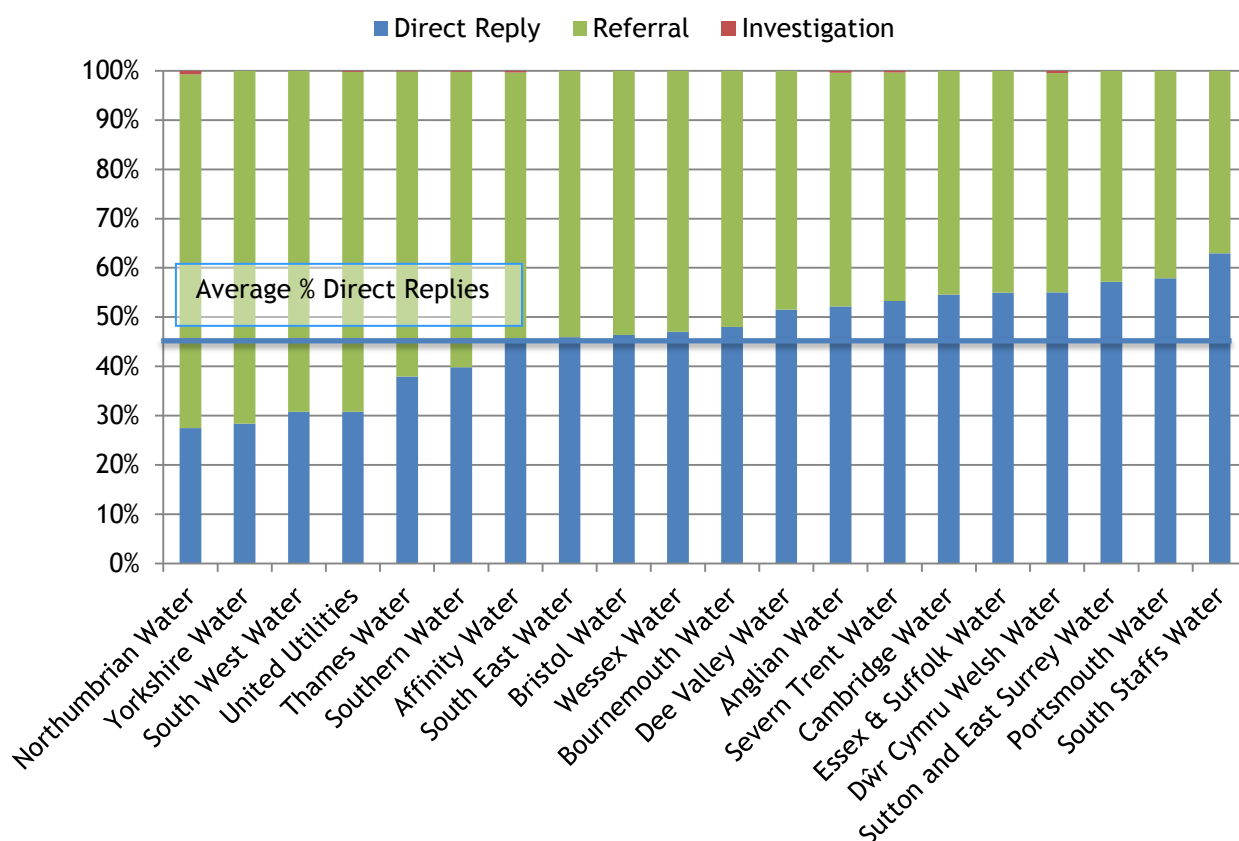


5.2.3 We expect transactional complaints referred to companies to take no more than 10 working days, plus two days for handling, to resolve. Complaints taking longer than this typically required more involved CCWater intervention. In 32% of complaints handled by CCWater in 2014-15 it took the company longer than 12 days to respond. This was most commonly an issue for first stage complaints, where 37% took over 12 days for a response. There is still work for CCWater to do in ensuring companies meet these targets and make statutory payments to consumers where they do not.

5.2.4 Chart 5 shows the proportion of direct replies and referrals CCWater undertakes per company. A higher share of direct replies from CCWater indicates that we could only tell consumers their companies had handled and resolved their complaint appropriately. A higher share of referrals shows companies that are

not fully engaging their consumers to avoid early stage complaints coming to CCWater. CCWater can add value by reinforcing our right first time ethos.

Chart 5: Handling method percent share by company



Note: so that averages are statistically robust, only companies with 10 or more complaints are shown

5.2.5 We held an investigations workshop in March 2014 for all Assistant Managers to reassure ourselves that when challenging companies we do not undersell our efforts by failing to classify complaints as investigations. Since then, table four shows an increase in the number of investigations we have undertaken against companies.

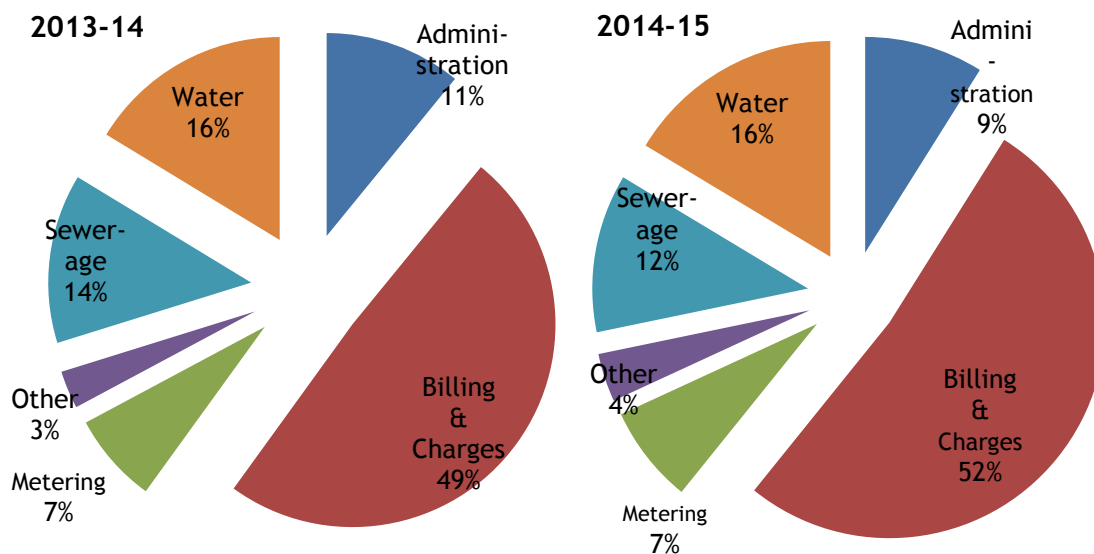
Table 4: CCWater investigations of companies

Company	2013-14	2014-15	Change
South East Water	1	0	-100%
Yorkshire Water	2	0	-100%
Thames Water	3	3	0%
Dŵr Cymru	2	2	0%
Severn Trent	3	4	33%
Anglian Water	2	5	150%
Southern Water	0	3	-
Northumbrian Water	0	1	-
United Utilities	0	2	-
Affinity Water	0	1	-
TOTAL	13	21	62%

5.3 Complaint Categories

5.3.1 Chart 6 shows the proportion of consumer complaints sorted into our broadest categories.

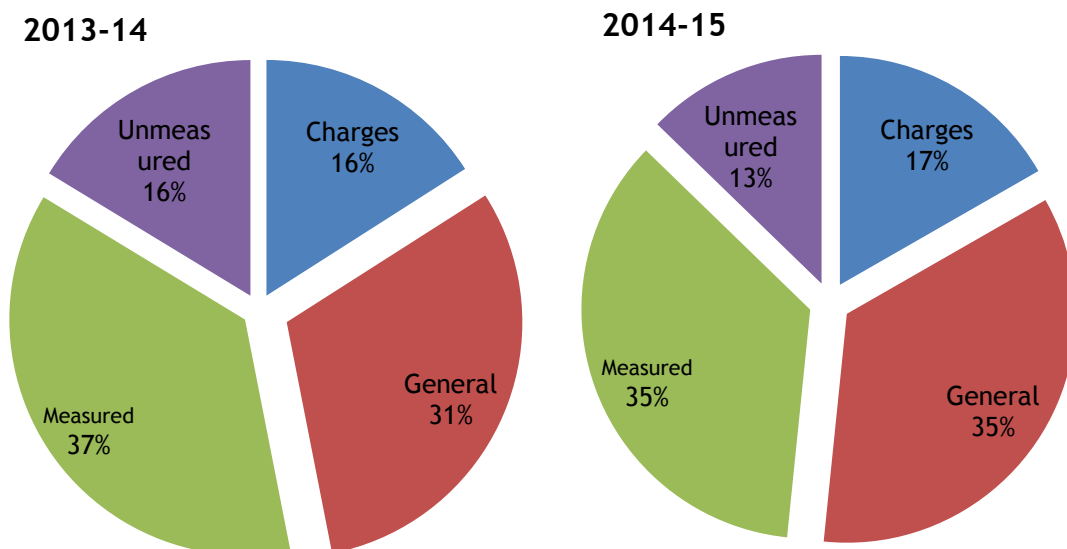
Chart 6: Complaint categories



5.3.2 Over half of complaints were about billing and charging. The volume of these complaints increased by 8% (+372 complaints) compared to last year, increasing the proportional share by three percentage points.

5.3.3 Chart 7 shows the division of subcategory complaints within the billing and charges category. There has been a change in proportion of the sub categories of billing and charges, with the proportion of complaints about measured and unmeasured bills decreasing, a slight increase in complaints about charges and a larger increase in the proportion of general billing and charges complaints.

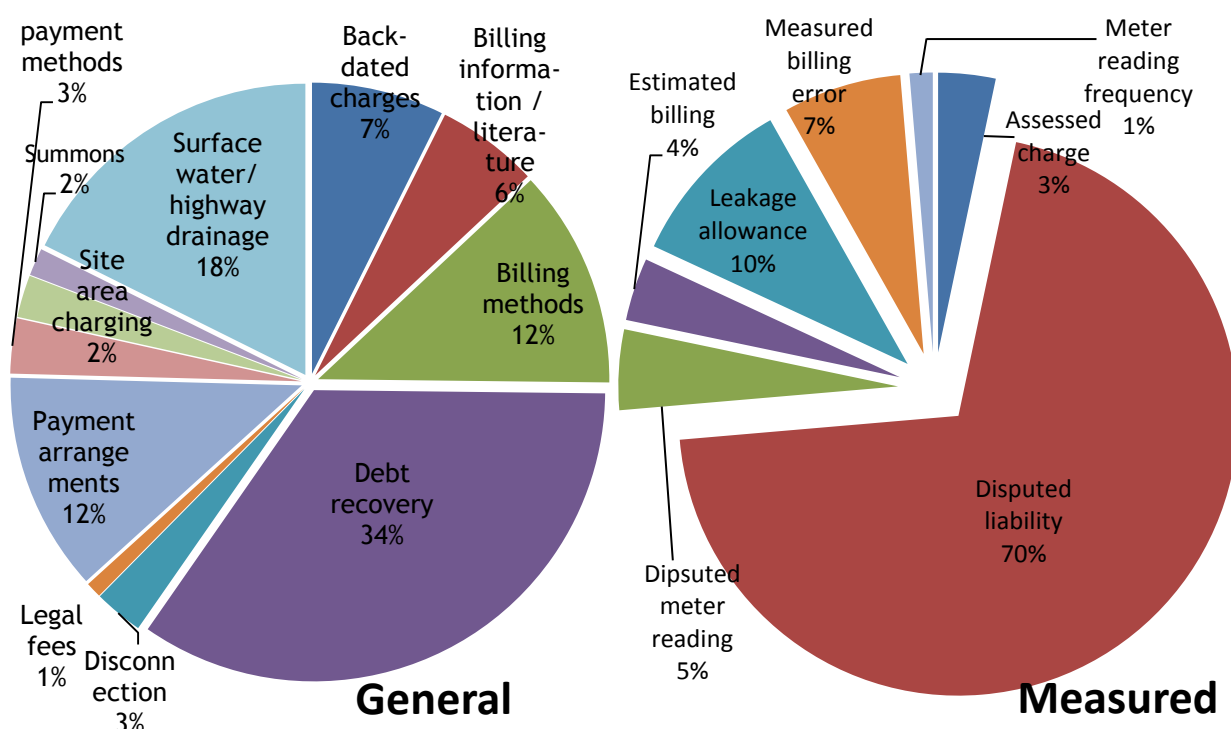
Chart 7: Billing and charges complaints



5.3.4 General billing complaints and measured billing complaints consistently make up the majority of billing and charges complaints. Within these two categories the largest root causes also remain consistent. In general billing and charges complaints, debt recovery is the most common cause of complaint, followed by surface water and highways drainage charges complaints. In measured billing complaints, disputed liability for the

bill is the most common cause of complaint. Chart 8 depicts the proportion of complaints for each root cause.

Chart 8: Measured billing and general billing and charges complaint root causes



5.3.5 Disputed liability of the measured bill accounted for 13% of all complaints that CCWater received in 2014-15. Debt recovery complaints made up 6%. External sewer flooding was the third most common cause of complaint (4% of all complaints), with delay in repair for water issues fourth (3% of all complaints).

5.4 Vulnerable customers

5.4.1 Vulnerable consumers are those with: “A condition or circumstance in which a consumer is at greater risk of being put at a disadvantage in terms of accessing or using a product or service.”

5.4.2 In 2014-15, 478 complainants identified themselves as vulnerable; around 5% of our total complaint contact. At 11%, our South West region received the highest proportion of vulnerable customer complaints of any office, which would tie into the higher charges associated with the region.

5.4.3 Vulnerable customers were actually more satisfied with aspects of our service compared to our overall customer base as shown in Table 5. Note though that the sample size of vulnerable customers is less than 100.

Table 5: Vulnerable Consumer Satisfaction

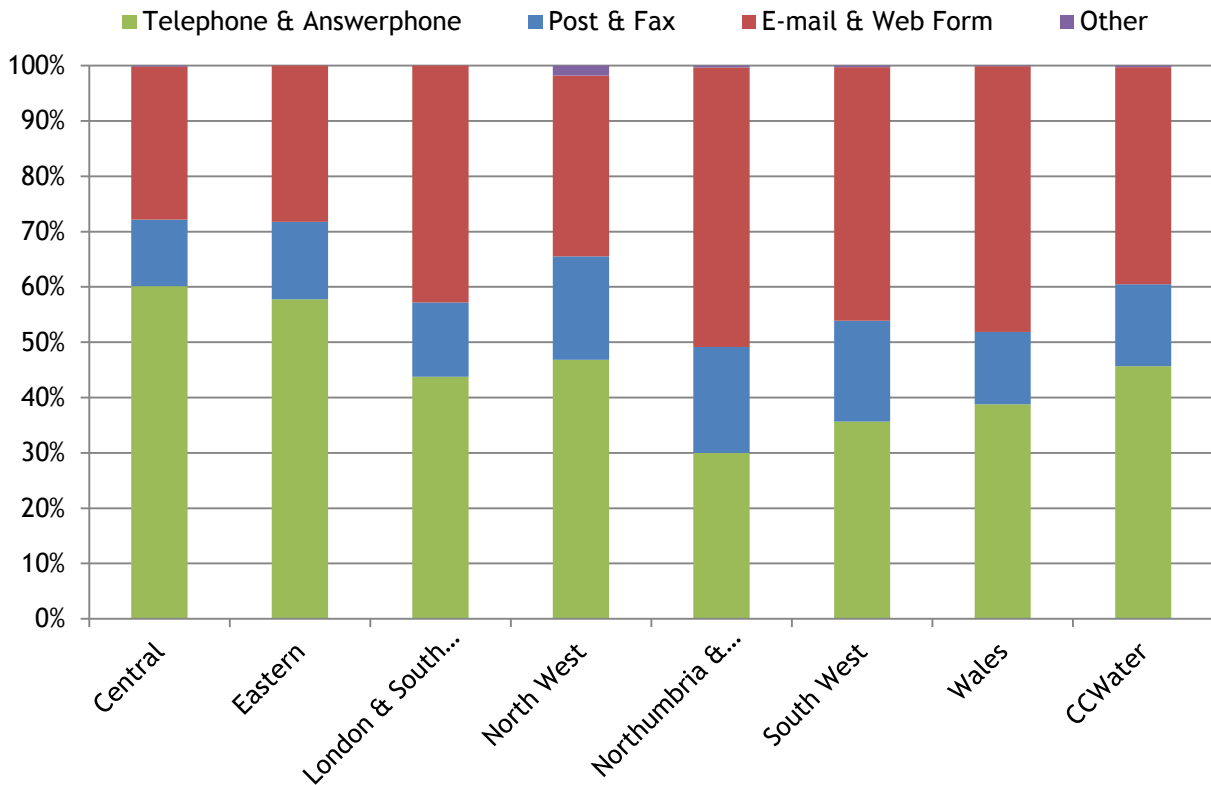
	Service	Outcome	Speed	Courtesy
Vulnerable customers	84%	71%	95%	98%
All customers	73%	57%	80%	93%

5.4.4 Amongst vulnerable consumers, 60% of complaints were about billing and charges. The most common root cause of these complaints was disputed liability of a measured bill, accounting for 18% of all vulnerable customer complaints. The next most common cause of complaint from vulnerable consumers was debt recovery, accounting for 7% of all vulnerable consumer complaints, followed by affordability (7% of all vulnerable consumer complaints) and payment arrangements (4%). All of these root causes fall within the billing and charges category. Whilst the top two causes of complaint for vulnerable consumers mirrors the top causes for all complaints, affordability and payment arrangements are less of a concern for consumers we have not identified as vulnerable.

5.5 Contact Methods

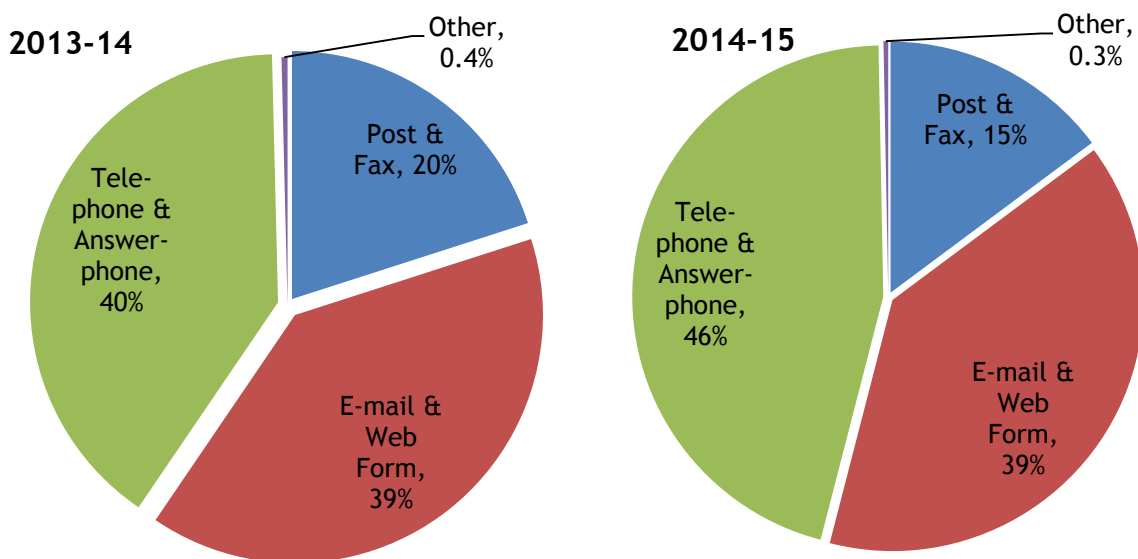
5.5.1 Chart 9 shows the method by which consumers contacted us to complain. Overall, we received 54% of complaints in writing (60% last year) and 46% by telephone (40% last year). Consumers made 0.3% of their contact with us through other means, such as office visits or our website feedback form.

Chart 9: Complaints by consumer method of contact



5.5.2 The decrease in written contact has been driven by a decrease in postal and e-mail contact. Written contact through our web form has increased by three percentage points. Consequently, the proportion of postal contact has decreased from 20% to 15% but the proportion of electronic contact (e-mail and web form) has remained static at 39%. Chart 10 shows the proportions of contact method in 2014-15 compared to 2013-14.

Chart 10: Change in complaint contact method



5.6 Consumer Support Site

5.6.1 Table 5 shows how consumers used our consumer support site in 2014-15. Virtually all visitors to the site found relevant answers, with only 2% going on to make a complaint or enquiry to CCWater.

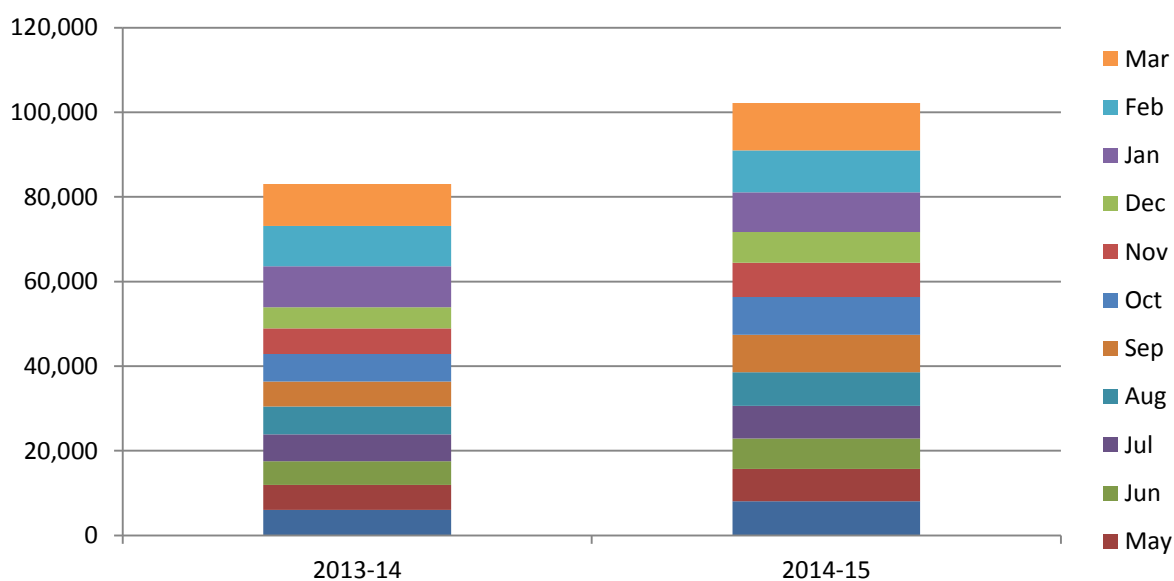
Table 5: Consumer usage of our Consumer Support web site

Month	User visits	User searches	Answers viewed	Webforms submitted to TAP	% of questions to visits
April	8,072	982	7,238	151	1.87%
May	7,661	771	6,943	125	1.63%
June	7,138	886	6,189	146	2.05%
July	7,732	979	6,925	165	2.13%
August	7,976	932	7,107	176	2.21%
September	8,826	1,050	8,930	179	2.03%
October	8,901	1,010	7,514	197	2.21%
November	8,165	949	7,174	169	2.07%
December	7,199	736	6,321	130	1.81%
January	9,429	1,147	8,339	157	1.67%
February	9,874	1,143	8,986	168	1.70%
March	11,204	1,148	10,057	194	1.73%
Total	102,177	11,733	91,723	1,957	1.92%

5.6.2 The answer to “who supplies my water?” is the most commonly viewed answer on our support site, accounting for 27% of all pages viewed by visitors. It is also the answer that generates the highest number of webforms; 13% of the total received. On our site we display the Water UK map of water and sewerage providers but in some areas, notably the South East, there are many companies and it can be difficult to see in which area a property may lie. We encourage consumers unsure of their supplier after looking at the map to send us their post code via the feedback form so that we can check and get back to them.

5.6.3 Twenty three percent more consumers visited our support site in 2014-15 than in 2013-14. Chart 11 shows that the increase has been steady throughout the year, with no particular month showing a surge in visitors.

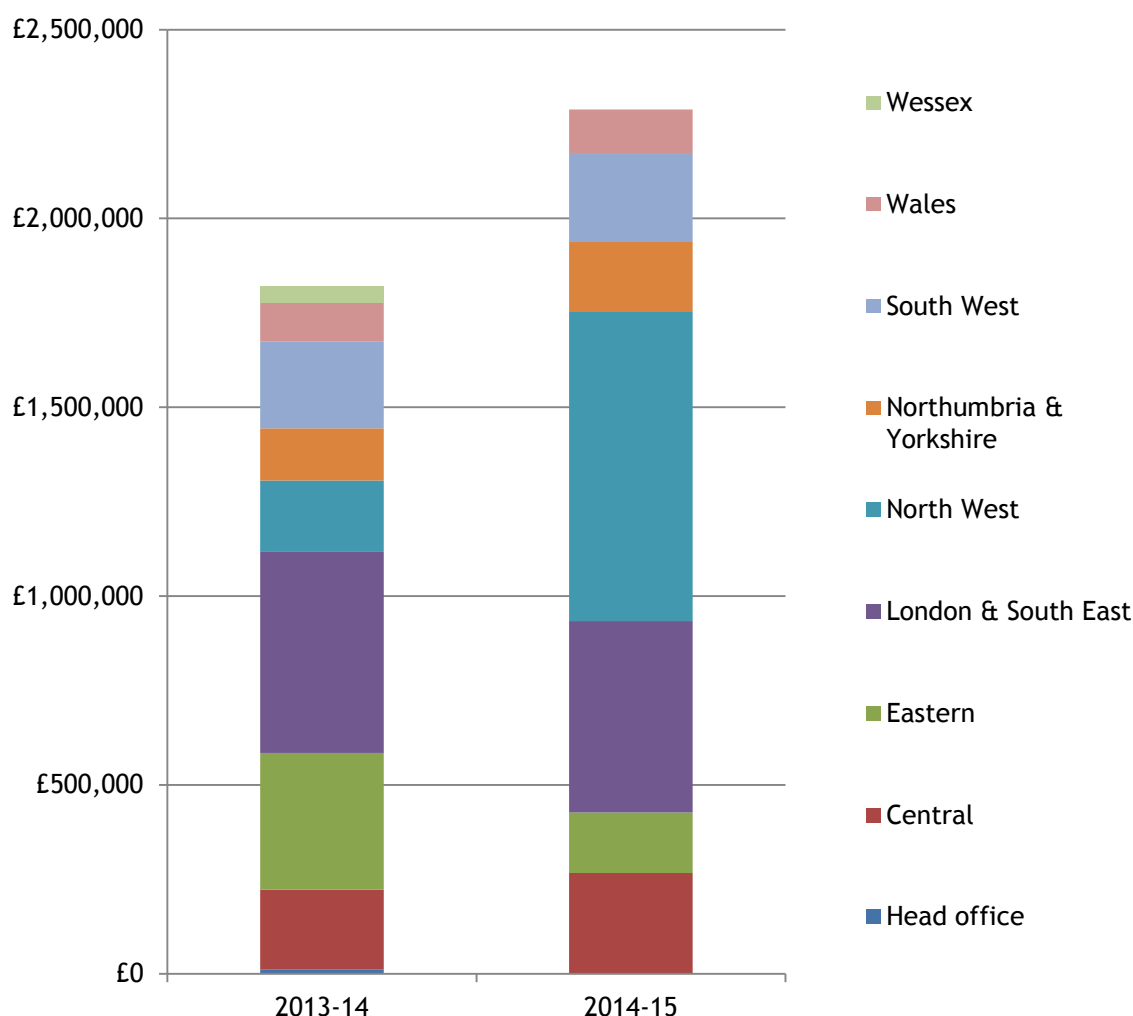
Chart 11: Year on year monthly site visits to the support site



5.7 Complaint Outcomes

5.7.1 Chart 12 shows that our offices helped consumers achieve redress of £2,288,646 in 2014-15. This is £469,120 more than we achieved in 2013-14. Our North West team had great success in achieving C£500,000 of rebates for United Utilities customers when it pushed the company to change its policy and enact it retrospectively in regard to surface water drainage (see 4.3.2).

Chart 12: Financial redress



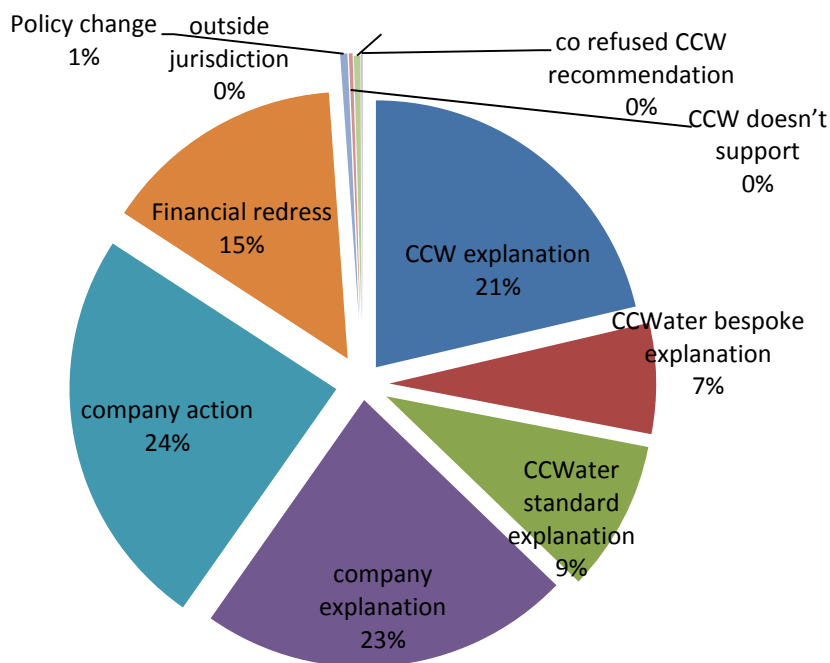
5.7.2 Our average redress per complaint is £226 compared to £183 last year. Looking at investigations, where the investigation was upheld (i.e. where CCWater improved the outcome of the case through company action, redress or policy change) the average redress was £1,187 per case.

5.7.3 Aside from financial redress, we may challenge the company to resolve a complaint by taking action (akin to an ombudsman “upholding” a complaint). We may decide companies should offer something as simple as a clearer explanation or as complex as a change to their policy. Chart 13 shows that companies took further action in 63% of complaints that we closed. Thirty-five complaints we received were outside of CCWater’s jurisdiction and 20 were complaints we could not support. There were six incidents where the company refused CCWater’s recommendation for resolution. Cases such as these six may benefit from approaching WATRS, the new ADR scheme¹ to be introduced on 1 April 2015.

¹ The Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) scheme being introduced to the industry is called WATRS - the Water Redress Scheme. Following CCWater involvement, if a consumer remains unhappy they can ask WATRS to make a binding decision on their case resolution. More information is at 8.1 or on the CCWater website [here](#).

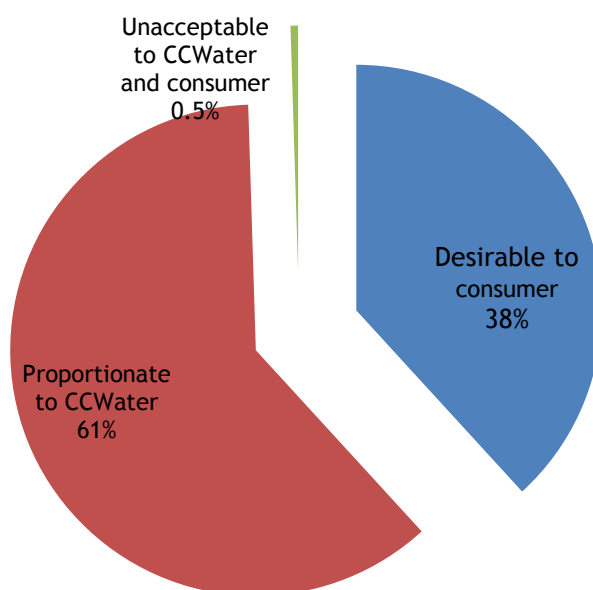
5.7.4 Part way through 2014-15 we changed how we record the outcome of complaints, meaning that we now are able to define if CCWater gave a standard or bespoke explanation to a consumer complaint. Standard explanations are where the consumer has a common issue, such as not being able to change a rateable value. Bespoke explanations are where CCWater has to undertake more work to get a robust answer to a consumer issue. Because the change was part way through the year, it is not possible to class all of our explanations as standard or bespoke this year but we will do so in 2015-16 reporting.

Chart 13: complaint outcomes



5.7.5 To help us better understand our consumer satisfaction levels in relation to the outcome of their case we now note whether the resolution was what the consumer desired, what CCWater felt was appropriate and proportionate although not what the consumer initially wanted, or something that was unacceptable to CCWater and the consumer. Chart 14 shows the proportions of this breakdown. As this change was implemented part way through the 2014-15 year only half of all complaints we received were recorded in this manner.

Chart 14: Outcome acceptability



5.7.6 In 99.5% of cases CCWater either achieved the resolution the consumer had hoped for or achieved what we considered to be a proportionate and appropriate outcome to the complaint. There were 28 cases in 2014-15 where neither CCWater nor the consumer felt the outcome was acceptable. Cases such as these may benefit from approaching WATRS (see 5.7.3 and 8.1).

5.7.7 Table 6 shows that in 2014-15 we received seven consumer requests for review and completed ten. This is more than received as some of the reviews we completed were carried over from 2013-14. It is pleasing that far fewer consumers have had cause to complain about CCWater’s handling of their complaint in 2014-15 than in the 2013-14. Our improved case handling is also reflected in the increase in consumer satisfaction with the overall quality of our service (see 5.8.1).

Table 6: Cases escalated to and completed at review stage

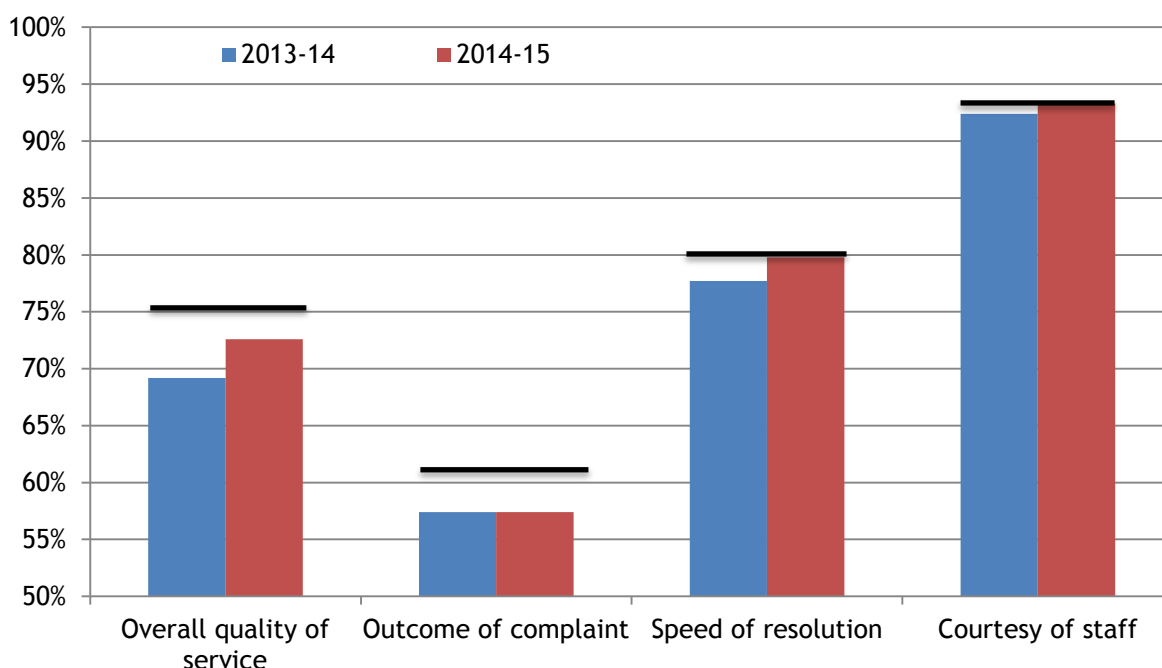
Region	Rec'd in 2013-14	Rec'd in 2014-15	Completed in 2013-14	Completed in 2014-15
Central and Eastern	2	3	2	3
London and South East	9	1	10	2
Northern	5	3	6	4
Wales	1	0	1	0
Western	4	0	3	1
Total	21	7	22	10

5.7.8 The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) made us aware of two consumers approaching it to review our handling in 2014-15; neither complaint was upheld. However, the PHSO only tells us of an approach if there is information it needs from us. As such, we will not know how many of our final review cases approached the PHSO until it publishes the numbers in its annual review.

5.8 Consumer Satisfaction

5.8.1 Chart 15 shows consumer satisfaction with various aspects of our service. Compared to last year, we have seen an improvement in three of the four satisfaction criteria. Satisfaction with the quality of service has increased by 3.4 percentage points, satisfaction with speed has increased by 2.1 percentage points, and courtesy has increased by 0.9 percentage points. Satisfaction with outcome has remained static.

Chart 15: Consumer satisfaction (black line is target)



5.8.2 We have met our Operational Business Plan (OBP) target for speed and courtesy. We missed OBP target for satisfaction with outcome by four percentage points and were below target for overall service by two percentage points.

5.8.3 Analysis of our consumer satisfaction survey shows consumers are less likely to be satisfied with an explanation (from CCWater or from the company) than they are with action or financial redress. As the majority of complaints are resolved with an explanation, CCWater has committed to improving how we give these explanations. From consumer survey feedback we know consumers sometimes feel we are not committed to investigating their case and that we are not acting independently of the company. We have held training workshops with consumer relations staff to:

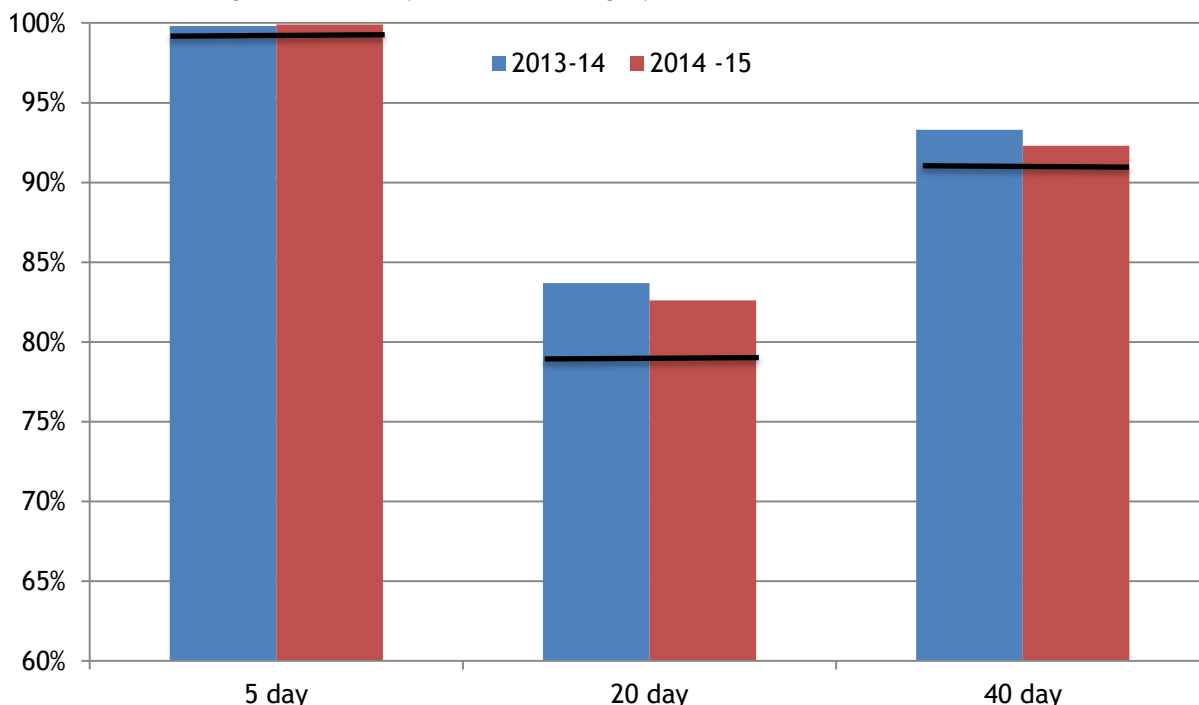
- help us better define desired outcomes,
- explain to a consumer in a positive way what is realistically achievable, and
- make sure consumers feel we have given their complaint our full and independent consideration.

5.8.4 The market research organisation that conducts our consumer satisfaction survey, SPA Future Thinking, undertakes in depth analysis of our survey results at the end of each financial year. SPA will identify the key drivers of consumers' satisfaction and, analysing the twelve months of results, which areas CCWater most needs to focus on to improve that. We will report to Board in late summer 2015 on SPA's findings and our suggested actions to address them.

5.9 Performance

5.9.1 Chart 16 shows key performance indicators (KPI) for performance in 2014-15 compared to 2013-14. Our 5-day acknowledgement has increased by 0.1% points to 99.9% (0.4 points above OBP target of 99.5%). Our performance in 20-day closures has decreased by 1.1 percentage points to 82.6% (3.6 points above our OBP target of 79%). Our performance in 40-day closures also decreased, by 1.0 percentage points, to 92.3% (1.3 points above our OBP target of 91%). There are two reasons for the decrease in 20 and 40-day performance; firstly that the average case took longer to close than it did last year and secondly that we closed a number of longstanding cases (reducing the open case load).

Chart 16: CCWater performance (black line is target)



5.9.2 Our average handling time for complaints increased from 15.6 working days in 2013-14 to 16.6 working days in 2014-15.

6. Enquiries

6.1 Enquiry numbers

6.1.1 Table 7 shows that there has been a 27% decrease in the number of consumer enquiries to CCWater in 2014-15 compared to 2013-14, from 10,849 to 7,965. We show all enquiry categories in chart 18 at 6.2.1.

Table 7: Enquiries about companies

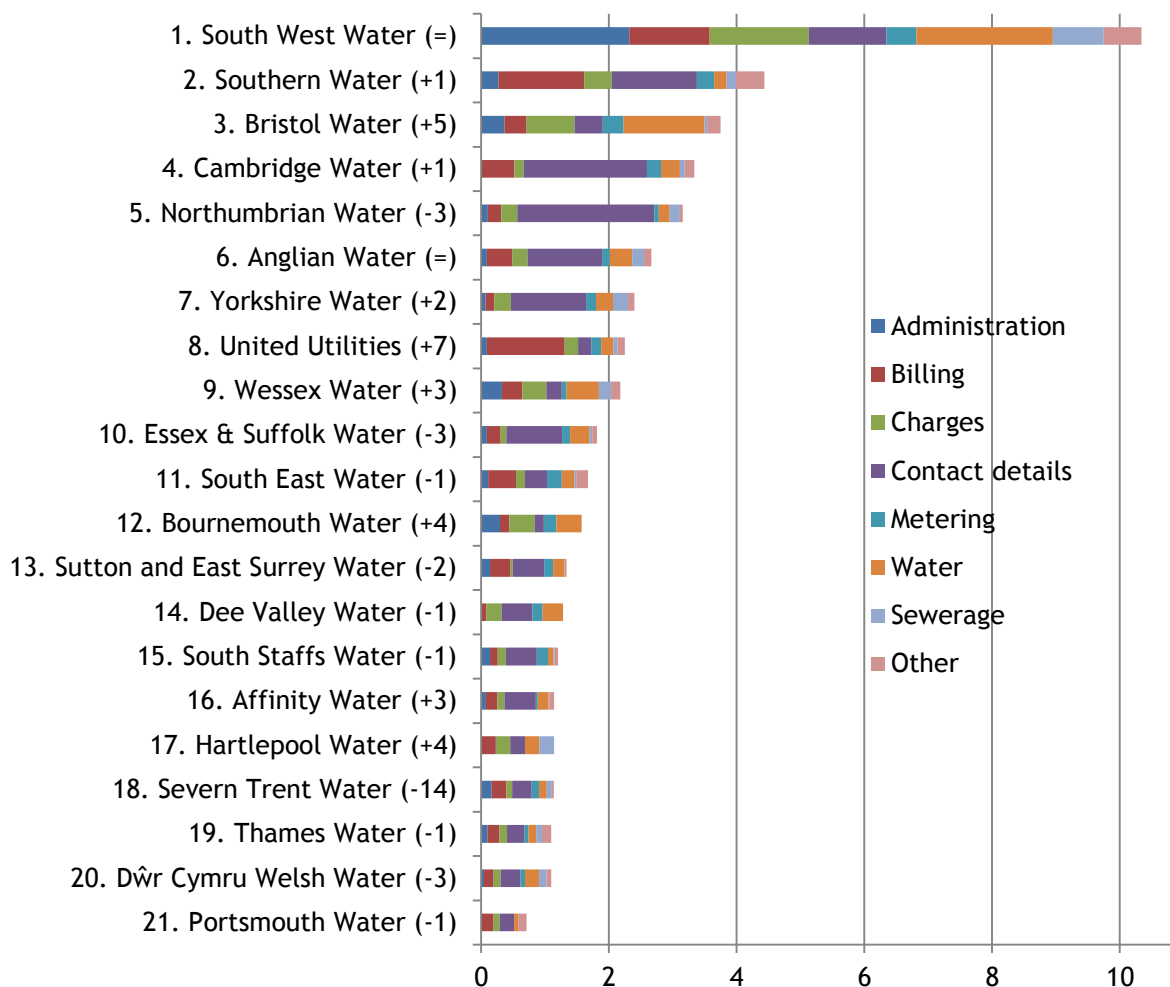
Company	2013-14	2014-15	Total	% change
Water and Sewerage Companies				
Severn Trent Water	1610	488	-1122	-70%
Northumbrian Water	749	401	-348	-46%
Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water	272	169	-103	-38%
Thames Water	891	630	-261	-29%
Anglian Water	1051	784	-267	-25%
South West Water	1018	833	-185	-18%
Yorkshire Water	639	571	-68	-11%
Wessex Water	289	277	-12	-4%
Southern Water	854	897	43	5%
United Utilities	654	753	99	15%
Water Only Companies				
Sutton and East Surrey Water	74	38	-36	-49%
South Staffs Water	118	69	-49	-42%
Dee Valley Water	27	16	-11	-41%
Essex & Suffolk Water	233	143	-90	-39%
Portsmouth Water	35	22	-13	-37%
South East Water	240	151	-89	-37%
Affinity Water	221	166	-55	-25%
Bournemouth Water	38	32	-6	-16%
Cambridge Water	50	45	-5	-10%
Hartlepool Water	4	5	1	25%
Bristol Water	149	195	46	31%
Cholderton and District Water Company	0	4	4	-
Other				
Independent Water Networks	3	1	-2	-67%
SSE Water/Swalec	5	2	-3	-60%
BWBSL	530	355	-175	-33%
Do not know company	475	368	-107	-23%
Non-company	618	549	-69	-11%
Veolia Water Projects	2	2	0	0%
Peel Water Networks	0	1	1	-
Total	10,849	7,965	-2884	-27%

6.1.2 Most companies saw a decrease in enquiry numbers. However, five companies saw an increase. Southern Water and United Utilities both saw the largest increase in billing enquiries. Bristol Water saw its largest increase in water enquires. We received four enquiries from Cholderton Water consumers compared to none last year. We will monitor enquiry levels but do not hold concerns about this increase at the moment. We received one extra enquiry about Hartlepool Water, so this increase was not significant.

6.1.3 Severn Trent Water saw a substantial decrease in enquiry numbers. The largest decrease was in billing enquiries. The company has changed its 08 number to an 03 number for billing enquiries. Historically, our teams have said that the high enquiry levels have been driven by consumers contacting us instead of Severn Trent as we advertise a geographical number. It seems this simple change has made a big impact on consumers.

6.1.4 Chart 17 shows the number of enquiries per 10,000 connections received by CCWater in relation to each company. The number in brackets provides the number of places the company moved in 2014-15 compared to 2013-14. We denote companies that had more enquiries this year compared to last year by (+) and companies that had less enquiries by (-).

Chart 17: Enquiries per 10,000 connections to CCWater about companies

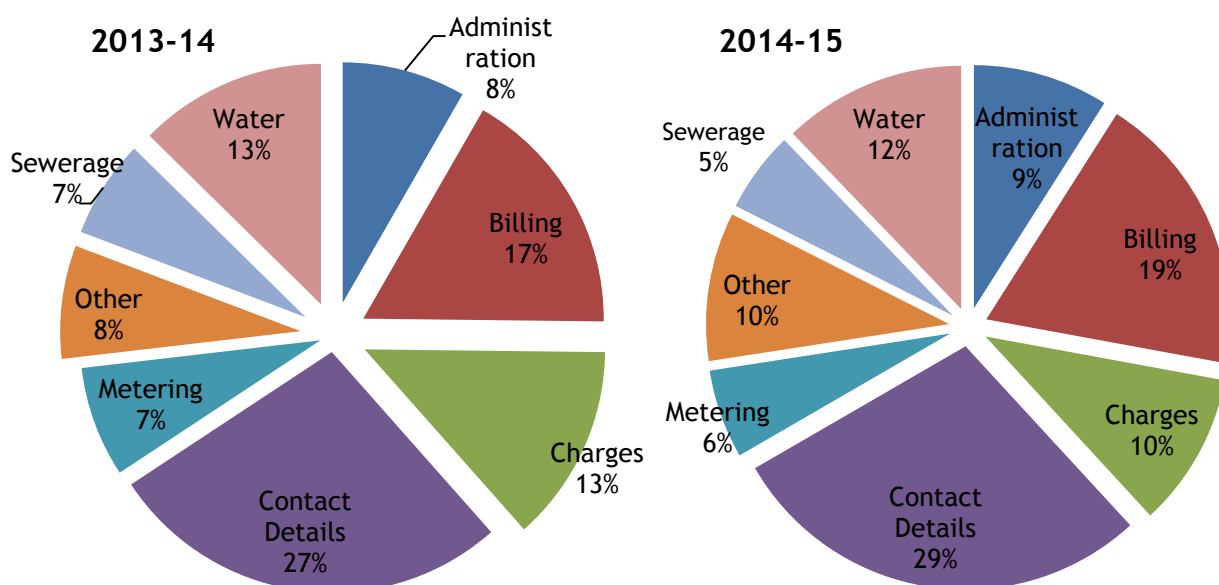


6.1.5 Nineteen of the 21 companies we have connection numbers for received four enquiries or less for every 10,000 connections. Southern Water received 4.4 enquiries per 10,000 connections. Billing and contact details were the largest category of enquiry for Southern Water consumers. South West Water received 10.3 enquiries for every 10,000 connections. Administration was the largest category of enquiry to CCWater from South West Water consumers.

6.2 Enquiry categories

6.2.1 Chart 18 shows how the share of enquiry categories has changed this year compared to last year. There has been a decrease of enquiries in all categories and some changes in share. The biggest decrease is in enquiries about charges, down 43% (-623 enquiries), which has reduced its share of enquiries by three percentage points. Fewer consumers are calling us about their bills before speaking to their companies now that 03 numbers are available to make contact on in most cases. We are pleased that this small change has afforded companies the opportunity to address consumer enquiries directly.

Chart 18: Enquiry categories

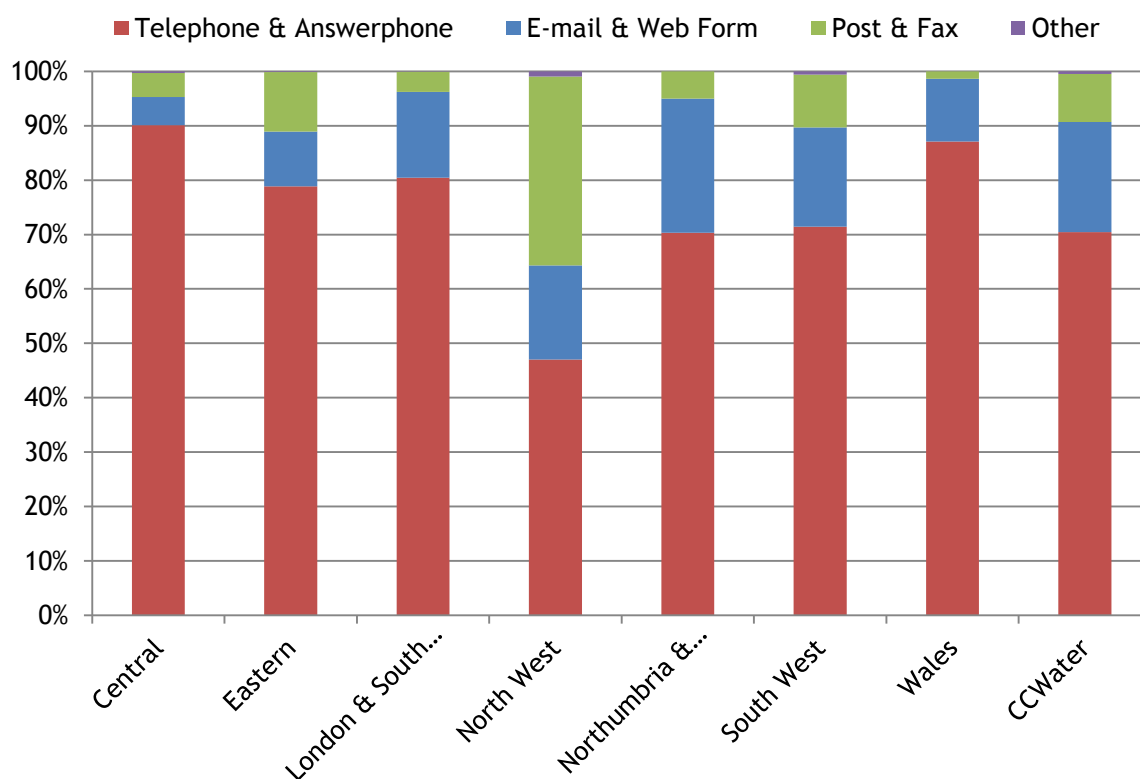


6.2.2 Contact details remains the most common enquiry consumers make to CCWater. Within this category are consumers who have contacted CCWater in error and need the contact details for their company and consumers unsure of who their water supplier is. Webforms created from our support site by consumers wanting to know who supplies their water fall into this category of enquiry (see 5.6.2).

6.3 Enquiry contact methods

6.3.1 Chart 19 shows the method by which consumers contacted us to make enquiries. Overall, we received 70.5% of enquiries by telephone and 29% in writing (post and electronic). Consumers made 0.5% of their enquiry contact with us through office visits and other methods.

Chart 19: Enquiries by consumer method of contact



6.3.2 Our North West office receives more postal enquiries than any other office. Our team has noticed that United Utilities' postal address is on the tear off strip on the back of its bills, so if a customer has paid a bill using this strip they will have removed the address. CCWater's postal address is still on the bill, so if a consumer refers to the bill at a later date they can easily confuse the CCWater address for the United Utilities one. Our team has spoken to the company about this and the company's bills will be amended.

7. Resource Implications

7.1 We have kept complaint and enquiry activities within the profiled Consumer Relations budget allocation for 2014-15.

8. Risk management

8.1 As referenced in 5.7.6, there is an alternative dispute resolution scheme called WATRS (Water Resolution Scheme) being introduced to the water industry with effect from 1 April 2015. To access the scheme, a consumer must first have exhausted their company's complaints procedure and approached CCWater. Once CCWater is involved, we will signpost a consumer to WATRS if we consider the case to have reached deadlock, if it has gone on for four weeks and CCWater is not investigating it or if it has gone on for eight weeks and CCWater is investigating it. In both the four and eight week scenarios, the consumer does not have to approach WATRS but can instead choose to wait for CCWater to finish its work and then if they remain unhappy approach the scheme at that point.

8.2 Where CCWater decides a case is at deadlock a consumer has six months from the date of the WATRS notification to approach the scheme. CCWater must ensure that its complaint handling is both streamlined and robust, as if WATRS frequently provides better outcomes than CCWater it could call into question our effectiveness as a consumer champion organisation. To mitigate against this risk we are in the process of setting up a quality assurance team and providing training to all consumer relations staff.

8.3 CCWater staff in regional offices are at risk of redundancy due to office closures. Whilst relocation to Birmingham or Cardiff is an option open to all existing Consumer Relations staff it is unlikely many will consider moving. Consequently, we will need to recruit and train new staff at both a complaint administrator and assistant manager level in 2015-16. We anticipate that the demotivating effect this change will have on staff at risk and the time it will take to train new team members could negatively affect our performance to KPI targets and consumer satisfaction. Even with training, the new members of staff will be replacing team members with many years of experience, so are unlikely to be performing to the same standard for the next 12 months. We have accordingly revised our OBP targets for the 2015-16 year to reflect the expected temporary impact during the restructure.

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