



## DRINKING WATER INSPECTORATE

Ground Floor, SW  
Seacole Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

Enquiries: 0330 041 6501

Email: [dwi.enquiries@defra.gov.uk](mailto:dwi.enquiries@defra.gov.uk)

DWI Website: [www.dwi.gov.uk](http://www.dwi.gov.uk)

### Information Letter 01/2024 (Revised)

6 August 2024

To: Board Level and Day to Day contacts of Water and Sewerage Companies and Water Companies in England and Wales

**First Published 21 February 2024**

**This revision to IL 01/2024 solely applies to the sub-categories of the Taste and Odour 'Other' descriptor (Table 3) and the root cause categories to be recorded from 1 January 2025 (and included in the 31 January 2026 data return).**

To whom it may concern

### **Annual Provision of Information on Consumer Contacts**

#### **1. Purpose**

The purpose of this letter is to update our Information Letter 04/2022 (revised), providing companies with guidance on the provision of information to the Inspectorate in respect of sections 9 and 10 of the Water Industry (Suppliers' Information) Direction 2023 relating to the reporting of consumer information about drinking water quality.

#### **2. Background and Changes**

Since the introduction of the requirement to report annual consumer contact figures in 2005, the wider industry has collaborated on the Discover Water project with the aim to provide consistent, comparable information to consumers. Consumer contact information is included on the Discover Water website based upon the criteria in the previous Information Letters IL 01/2006 and IL 04/2022 and revised IL 04/2022.

Whilst the criteria for categorising consumer contacts is unchanged, this letter introduces a new reporting format that includes a detailed data return for each water quality contact received.

Additional information for each water quality contact will be collected by the populating of additional columns (see Annex). This will include:

- A unique reference for each contact;
- Details of the district metered area the contact is located in;
- The date and time of the contact;
- The national grid reference (easting and northing) of the location of the contact;
- The mode of contact;
- Whether the contact is a repeat within a 12-month rolling period (that is a new occurrence or 'case' of a similar issue from the same consumer);
- and if the contact is associated with a notifiable event, and the event reference number associated with it.

Additional guidance is included in paragraph 4.1 on recording of contacts in which consumers report multiple water quality issues.

### **3. Definitions**

This section sets out definitions to be used by companies in making their returns. These definitions are hierarchical: first a consumer contact about drinking water quality is defined (3.1) followed by definitions for five categories (subsets) of consumer contact (3.1.1 through to 3.1.5). More detailed guidance (with examples) on the application of these definitions follows in section 4. A pragmatic approach has been taken in developing the guidance, so it reflects the broad range of consumer contacts received and recorded across the industry. It is recognised that some companies may receive few, if any, contacts in some of the categories.

#### **3.1. A consumer contact about drinking water quality**

This requirement is defined as any communication about drinking water quality initiated by a consumer living or working in the area supplied by the water company including, but not limited to:

- Phone

- Letter
- Email
- In person
- Social media message or post for example X (formerly known as Twitter), Facebook and Instagram
- Website request form or webchat (including a WhatsApp interface)
- Accessibility interfaces such as Minicom
- A message left on a helpline

For webchat and social media contacts, often water companies will ask the consumer to provide either their address details or their telephone number (via direct or private message) for the company to investigate further. Once the company receives the details of the perceived water quality issue, the time of the first contact initiated by the consumer should be recorded as when the contact was received. This will ensure that the time of when the consumer first reports their water quality issue is accurately recorded.

All advertised company handles should be included in the measure of water quality contacts. Posts about water quality that are not on the advertised company handles should not be reported for the purposes of this letter. However, such posts may constitute ‘local or national publicity’ and be reportable as an event under section 9(1)(d)(ii) of the Water Industry (Suppliers’ Information) Direction 2023. Consumer comments about another consumer posting should not be reported as a water quality contact.

There are five categories of consumer contact that should be recorded. These are defined as follows:

Table 1: Consumer contact enquiries

|   |                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | <b>A consumer enquiry about drinking water quality</b>           | A contact made solely with the intent of eliciting information from the company about drinking water quality, in the absence of any expression of concern, dissatisfaction or service shortfall. |
| 2 | <b>A consumer contact about the appearance of drinking water</b> | A contact where the consumer perceives something different about the                                                                                                                             |

|   |                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|   |                                                                       | appearance of the water from the “norm”.                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 3 | <b>A consumer contact about the taste and odour of drinking water</b> | A contact where the consumer perceives that the water has a taste or smell.                                                                                                                                              |
| 4 | <b>A consumer contact about illness</b>                               | A contact where the consumer attributes specific symptoms of illness to the water, including reports of illness amongst family members of the household, within their workplace or at another location such as a school. |
| 5 | <b>A consumer contact about a water quality concern</b>               | A contact where the consumer expresses a concern about drinking water other than its appearance, taste or smell and they are not attributing symptoms of a current illness to the water.                                 |

## 4. Applying the definitions

This section provides guidance to help company staff with assessing and recording consumer contacts about drinking water quality.

### 4.1. General principles

Not every consumer contact will be a “customer complaint”. The definition of a consumer contact is wider and aimed at gaining an understanding of the public perceptions of drinking water quality. There is no need to establish “dissatisfaction” or a “shortfall in the level of service” as a feature of a consumer contact for it to be recorded in the dataset.

Some consumers may refer to more than one matter during a single contact; for example, a consumer may wish to query their bill at the same time as commenting on their drinking water quality. Companies must ensure that these “multiple contacts” which deal in part with drinking water quality are recorded as a consumer contact about drinking water quality.

If the consumer is reporting multiple water quality issues in a single contact, for example an odour issue as well as discolouration, then companies can use either a ‘1’

or '2' in the columns to distinguish what the 'primary' descriptor and any 'secondary' descriptors are. Companies should continue with how they currently identify and record multiple contacts. For example, if a water company already reports multiple descriptors as separate contacts, then these should be denoted with a '1' in the relevant columns. If water companies only report the primary descriptor, then a '2' can be used to denote the secondary descriptors that any consumers are reporting.

**It is important that water companies do not change their current reporting processes with how they currently log descriptors with these changes to the annual data submission to ensure that current performance reporting (including those used for performance commitments) is not affected by the inclusion of the requirement to report multiple descriptors.**

If a consumer contacts the company on more than one occasion about the same aspect of their drinking water quality this should only be recorded as a single contact if the second, or subsequent contacts, are progress seeking in nature, such as asking for results of testing. Details of when the contact was first received should be included in the data return but further contacts, whether inbound or outbound should not be included if these are involved in resolving the 'case' associated with the initial contact.

It is particularly important that the company does not judge for itself but establishes from the consumer whether any second or subsequent contact is perceived to be a new event or a continuation of the former one. If the company has closed the 'case' associated with the initial contact, then it would most likely follow that any further contacts would be treated as a new contact. Where this remains unclear each contact should be separately recorded in the dataset.

#### **4.2. Applying the definition of a consumer enquiry about drinking water quality**

A contact should only be recorded as an enquiry if the sole nature of the contact is seeking information from the company. If there are other elements to the contact then these should take precedence in deciding how to classify the contact, for example "my water tastes of chlorine, can you tell me the amount in my water" would be classified as a consumer contact about the taste and odour of drinking water whereas "can you tell me how much chlorine is in my water" would be classified as an enquiry. If the request for information by the consumer is clearly driven by worry or anxiety for the wellbeing of themselves or members of their

household, then the contact should be recorded as a consumer contact about a water quality concern (see section 4.6).

Companies should record enquiries using the four categories below:

- request for information about the **fluoride** level.
- request for information on **water hardness**, typically for the purpose of operating a domestic appliance.
- request for a **water quality report**.
- request for **other information**.

Typically, but not exclusively, these will be asking about some aspect of how the water is treated or the source it comes from, alternatively they may be asking about drinking water quality standards or how drinking water quality is regulated. Only classify an enquiry in this category if it requires an answer to be specially prepared by the company's water quality scientist, do not record enquiries that are so routine that they are answered by sending out a standard leaflet or fact sheet, or an education pack for schools.

Note 1: the emboldened words are the subcategory names for reporting the data.

#### **4.3. Applying the definition of a consumer contact about the appearance of drinking water**

A contact should be recorded in this category only when the consumer's concern about their drinking water quality is clearly based on an observation (or a perception) that its appearance is other than "normal".

Companies should record these contacts using the categories below:

Table 2: Appearance of water categories

|   |                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | <b>Discoloured water – brown/black/orange</b> | The colour of the water is the focus of the contact even though this may be understood by the company to be accompanied by mains deposits suspended in the water (also include here staining of laundry due to discoloured water and concerns arising from problems with tanks and boilers due to mains deposits after a burst). |
|---|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|   |                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 | <b>Discoloured water – blue/green</b> | The colour of the water is the focus of the contact (do not include here if the colour is only mentioned as being present on deposits adherent to a tap, bath or shower tiles/tray – these should be recorded in the General Conditions category, see below).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 3 | <b>Particles</b>                      | The focus is reported as visible particles, either floating in the water or settled out in the bottom of a glass or jug (the water would be reported as clear).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 4 | <b>White – air</b>                    | The contact refers to white or milky looking water and the glass test confirms that the cloudiness clears from the bottom up leaving no sediment.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 5 | <b>White – chalk</b>                  | The contact refers to white or milky looking water and the glass test confirms that the cloudiness clears from the top down leaving white sediment on the bottom.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 6 | <b>Animalcules</b>                    | The contact refers to seeing a creature, living or dead, typically these will be either chironomid larvae or Asellus but include here any contact where a specimen is subsequently provided and identified by the company's water quality scientist as an aquatic animal. (Exclude contacts about slimes adhering to a tap or water fitting – these should be recorded in the General Conditions category, see below).                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 7 | <b>General conditions</b>             | The contact relates to the appearance of a deposit or slime or colour that is present on the outside of a tap or water fitting, included here are contacts about hardness deposits in kettles, staining of the sink, bath, shower cubicle, tiles etc. This category of contact deals with common consumer concerns where the water itself appears normal (it is clear and bright in appearance and free from taste and odour) and the phenomenon is arising within the household environment. A typical cause being inadequate ventilation combined with the use of aerosol dispensed household or personal products. |

|  |  |                                                                                                                                                  |
|--|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  | This category should also be used for contacts relating to the quality of water in hot water systems or heating/cooling systems and humidifiers. |
|--|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

#### 4.4. A consumer contact about the taste and odour of drinking water

A contact should be recorded in this category only when the consumer's concern about their drinking water quality is clearly based on an observation (or a perception) that its taste or odour is other than "normal".

Companies should record these contacts using the categories below:

Table 3: Taste and odour of water categories

|   |                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | <b>Chlorine</b>      | The consumer states that the taste or odour is due to chlorine in the water. This category will include all chlorine related descriptions, for example, TCP taste, disinfectant/medicinal odours on boiling a kettle or taking a shower, smells like a swimming pool (exclude burning sensation in the mouth – these should be classified as illness as the description relates to a symptom not to the water).                                                                   |
| 2 | <b>Earthy/Musty</b>  | The consumer description of the taste or odour is such that it is clear they perceive a natural taste or odour relating to soil or vegetation (include here specific tastes known to be due to algae such as 2-MIB or geosmin as well as general descriptions such as musty or stagnant, companies may wish to use this category for recording contacts where the investigation has shown conditions that give rise to warming of the mains water supply, long runs of pipe etc). |
| 3 | <b>Petrol/Diesel</b> | The consumer description of the taste or odour is such that they clearly perceive the presence of petroleum or hydrocarbon-based substances (include here specific odours such as petrol, diesel, creosote, as well as general descriptions such as oily, solvent).                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

|   |                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 | <b>Other taste or odour</b> | <p>This category covers the less frequently encountered tastes and odours such as bitter, metallic, sweet, salty/saline. This category should also be used for any taste or odour not specifically mentioned in any other taste and odour category. Care should be taken in classifying contacts reporting a metallic taste because some consumers describe chlorine in the water in this manner. The following sub-categories should be used:</p> <p>01 (Metallic, bitter, chemical)<br/> 02 (Changed)<br/> 03 (Salty)<br/> 04 (Sulphur, eggy, sewerage, drain)<br/> 05 (All others, awful, bad, unknown, soapy, fishy)</p> |
|---|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

#### 4.5. A consumer contact about illness

A contact should be recorded in this category whenever the consumer reports symptoms of ill health in their household or workplace, or some other location such as a school and attributes these symptoms to the water.

Companies should record these contacts using the categories below:

Table 4: Illness categories

|   |                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | <b>Gastroenteritis</b> | The symptoms are described as one or more of the following: sickness, diarrhoea, vomiting, nausea, bilious (or equivalent lay terms such as stomach upset). This includes confirmed cases of cryptosporidiosis. |
| 2 | <b>Oral</b>            | The symptoms relate to when water is taken into the mouth (include here descriptions such as sore throat, burning sensation on tongue or when swallowing, heartburn).                                           |
| 3 | <b>Skin</b>            | The symptoms relate to a sensation (irritation, itchy) or a change in appearance (red, blotchy, dry,                                                                                                            |

|   |                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|   |                        | flaky) of the skin anywhere on the body (including the scalp and hair condition). Include here reports of results of tests on hair or patch tests for allergies where positive findings were attributed to tap water.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 4 | <b>Medical Opinion</b> | This category should be used when it is clear the only reason for the contact by the consumer is advice they have been given by a doctor (or some other health professional such as a nurse, health visitor, consultant, or surgeon) along the lines of “my doctor said tap water was bad for me”. The advice may be verbal or in the form of a leaflet provided by the doctor or the health professional. Exclude from this category any contacts where consumers are reporting a confirmed diagnosis of cryptosporidiosis, these should be included in the Gastroenteritis category above. Also exclude contacts where the medical advice is indirect such as a doctor writing in a magazine or on the internet or interviewed on TV, radio, internet (see section 4.6 for how to record these contacts). |

#### 4.6. A consumer contact about a water quality concern

A contact should be recorded in this category whenever the consumer reports a concern about their drinking water quality other than its appearance, taste or odour; they are not reporting symptoms of a current illness; and the contact is not a straightforward request for information (see section 4.2 above). Companies should record these contacts using the categories below:

Table 5: Water quality concern categories

|   |                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | <b>Pets and Other Animals</b> | The contact is a concern about the drinking water quality in relation to the wellbeing of a domestic pet or an animal, not the consumer or their family members (include here fish, reptiles, and birds as well as cats, dogs, etc.). This category will also include concerns regarding drinking water for animals kept for commercial purposes (such as aquaria, farms, studs, wildlife parks or zoos). |
|---|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|   |                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 | <b>Lead and Other Analysis</b> | The contact is asking for the water to be tested (mainly this will be about the presence of lead because there are babies or young children living or visiting the house, or it is a school building), but include here all contacts where the consumer's perception (not the company view) is that "water testing" is the reassurance they require about the quality of their drinking water. Companies may wish to record lead analysis requests as a discrete subset.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 3 | <b>Lifestyle</b>               | The contact may be about any aspect (parameter) of water quality, but it is clear the contact was prompted by information the consumer has obtained from a newspaper or magazine article, from the internet or from a programme on the TV or the radio (this may also include references to historical water quality incidents in any part of the country or globally, for example Camelford, the US incident regarding lead in supplies or Franklaw <i>Cryptosporidium</i> incident). Contacts about the quality of bottled water as compared to tap water should be included here, as should contacts about the need to fit any domestic point of use treatment unit.                                                                                                                                     |
| 4 | <b>Incident related</b>        | <p>The contact is prompted by the water company issuing boil water or similar precautionary advice and the contact is not a straightforward request for clarification such as "do I live in the area affected"? Rather it relates to a concern that is not covered by the incident Q &amp; A fact sheet prepared for use by company staff and it requires a specific reply by the company's water quality scientists or medical advisor.</p> <p>Note 2: Companies are reminded that although excluded from this category, consumer contacts received in the course of managing a notified water quality incident are required to be recorded under an incident code and reported to the Inspectorate in the company's 3 or 20-day incident report. (See section 6.2.2 and Annex). Furthermore, contacts</p> |

|   |                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|   |                  | that are excluded from other columns in the dataset because they are associated with water quality events or incidents must be included in the data return and the relevant DWI event reference code included in column 36 of the submission, and the descriptors reported by the consumer during the event appropriately identified in the relevant columns.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 5 | <b>Campaigns</b> | The contact is responding to literature (or media reports) about a specific campaign relating to a substance or organism in drinking water (for example, contacts due to the activities of either the anti or pro fluoride lobby) or the contact is prompted by the aggressive marketing locally of devices which claim to remove “poisons” from the tap water. This category may also be used for contacts prompted due to business or regulatory Environmental Reporting, for example, if the consumer has made the incorrect assumption that drinking water is affected with respect to river pollution, endocrine disrupters in sewage works discharges, bans on chemicals etc. |

## 5. Format and Timing of Returns to the Inspectorate

Companies should upload their annual returns to the Inspectorate’s data upload portal in the form of a CSV spreadsheet by 31 January each year. Instructions on its use are provided in the Annex to this letter. The filename should consist of the companies designated three letter company code followed by ‘CC’MMYY. For example: ANHCCJAN25.csv

## 6. Other Issues

### 6.1. Customer Complaints

Companies record customer complaints (contacts expressing dissatisfaction and indicating a service shortfall) for routine business reasons.

Since the early 1990s Ofwat and CCW have required companies to provide customer complaint information for the purpose of evaluating levels of service. However, the Inspectorate’s requirement for information about consumer contacts about drinking

water quality (section 3.1) is different. The definition of a “contact” is wider than “a complaint” and looks at the public perception of drinking water quality through measurement of drinking water quality specific communications between the company and all consumers (not just bill payers). The recording and analysis of drinking water quality contacts in the way set out in this guidance has been practiced by the water industry for many years and the first papers publishing such information date back to the turn of the twentieth century (Metropolitan Water Board Annual Reports). There have been several substantial studies of the public perception of drinking water quality, and these have all shown the valuable insights to be gained from the collection and analysis of such information. These insights could not have been attained from consumer satisfaction surveys or complaints handling process analysis nor by testing samples of water in the laboratory.

## **6.2. Exclusions and Inclusions**

There are certain circumstances in which it is appropriate to exclude a contact from the data return:

- 6.2.1.** Consumer contact relates to water supplied by another water company (do not include these contacts in the dataset).
- 6.2.2.** Contacts may be received by companies through their websites or social media handles. Many of these are from school children and college students seeking information to help them with an educational assignment – these contacts should be excluded from the dataset as many are not company specific. However, if a company sets up a drinking water area of its website specifically inviting consumers to use the facility to contact the company about their drinking water quality, then these should be recorded in the dataset (see section 3.1).
- 6.2.3.** Some companies have dedicated numbers for the public to ring and report specific matters such as leaks or use of hoses in a drought (these are not contacts about drinking water quality).
- 6.2.4.** It can be difficult to establish the nature of a contact, for example, where English is not the first language of the caller, or the call is made on behalf of a consumer by somebody else. Companies are expected to take all reasonable steps to establish if a call is a contact about drinking water quality and where it

is unclear to take the precautionary approach by including such contacts in the dataset.

**6.2.5.** When a contact is investigated because it is also a “complaint” and the complaint is subsequently considered to be unjustified, the contact should still be retained in the dataset. However, when a company receives frequent contacts from one consumer (or household) over a long period of time (sometimes referred to as a vexatious caller) and another agency, such as CCW, the local authority or the Inspectorate, has investigated the matter and concurs with the companies’ judgement, all the contacts from the consumer can be recorded as a single contact.

**6.2.6.** Contacts from representatives of consumers such as a local councillor or an MP usually relate to a water quality incident or to a consumer’s complaint and inclusion of these would duplicate information already recorded.

**6.2.7.** Some contacts relate to the quality of drinking water in a public building or commercial premises and involve several different callers. These may be recorded as a single contact if they clearly relate to the same building or water system, however details of when the first contact was received should be included in the submission.

**6.2.8.** On investigation some contacts will be found to relate to a private supply of water and not the company’s public water supply (exclude these contacts).

Copies of this letter are being sent to David Henderson, Chief Executive, Water UK; Martin Woolhead, Deputy Director Water Sector Delivery, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Matt Mulley, Water Management Team, Welsh Government; Matthew Bower, Drinking Water Quality Regulator for Scotland; Berni Corr, Drinking Water Inspectorate for Northern Ireland; Karen Gibbs and Mike Keil, CCW; Lara Frewin and Paul Martin, Ofwat; Anne Dacey and Richard Thompson, Environment Agency; Nadeem Raja, Food Standards Agency; Stephen Robjohns, UK Health Security Agency.

This letter is being sent electronically to board level and day-to-day contacts. Please acknowledge receipt by email to [dwi.enquiries@defra.gov.uk](mailto:dwi.enquiries@defra.gov.uk). Hard copies are not being sent but the letter may be freely copied.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laura Moss'.

Laura Moss  
Deputy Chief Inspector

## Annex to Information Letter 01/2024

An example template is provided with this letter in the form of a Microsoft Excel Worksheet for returns of information in respect of section 10 of the Water Industry (Suppliers' Information) Direction 2023. The spreadsheet is formatted as follows. The header row should be included in this return.

| Field Name       | Field Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Status<br>(mandatory/<br>optional) | Field Type | Field size | Field Example<br>(for illustration<br>only) |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------|------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Unique reference | The unique reference of the contact should be determined by the water company but must start with the three-letter company code and should be of sufficient length and format to ensure the continued reporting of unique contacts year on year | Mandatory                          | Text       | 30         | ANH29JAN2024<br>00001                       |
| Company code     | Standard three-letter DWI company code                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Mandatory                          | Text       | 3          | ANH                                         |
| Zone             | The water supply zone reference that the contact is received from and must match the corresponding reference in the sites detail table                                                                                                          | Mandatory                          | Text       | 15         | WSZ00100                                    |

| Field Name | Field Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Status (mandatory/ optional) | Field Type                     | Field size     | Field Example (for illustration only) |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| DMA        | The district metered area the contact is received from. In the small number of cases where a contact falls outside of a district metered area this should be marked as NA. In the small number of cases where a DMA boundary changes each year, the company should determine the best way to report the DMA, for example it maybe the company decides to use the boundaries at the start or end of the year rather than determining the actual DMA at the time the contact was received. | Mandatory                    | Text                           | 30             | DMA-00101010                          |
| Date       | Date of contact                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Mandatory                    | Date format DD/MM/YYYY         |                | 29/01/2024                            |
| Time       | Time of contact                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Mandatory                    | Time format 24-hour clock time |                | 10:51                                 |
| Easting    | Using the standard NGR system, to 6 numbers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Mandatory                    | Number                         | 4-6 characters | 285300                                |

| Field Name      | Field Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Status (mandatory/ optional) | Field Type       | Field size                | Field Example (for illustration only) |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Northing        | Using the standard NGR system, to 6 numbers                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Mandatory                    | Number           | 4–6 characters            | 797790                                |
| Mode of contact | Denote mode of contact with a number:<br>01 – Telephone<br>02 – Letter<br>03 – Email<br>04 – In person<br>05 – Social media<br>06 – Webform/webchat<br>07 – Message left on a helpline/answer system<br>08 – Accessibility interfaces<br>09 – Other | Mandatory                    | text             | Only accept numbers 01–09 | 01                                    |
| Repeat contact  | Company should determine whether the contact is a repeat contact (same property reporting a separate occurrence of an issue) within a rolling 12-month period                                                                                       | Mandatory                    | text - Yes or No | Only accept Yes or No     | No                                    |

| Field Name                                       | Field Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Status (mandatory/ optional) | Field Type | Field size                                                                                | Field Example (for illustration only) |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Categories and subcategories of contacts         | The type of contact should be identified with a '1'. Where there are dual issues being reported, the company can denote 'secondary' descriptors as a '2'. Note the requirement to include a taste and odour 'other' descriptor will come into effect from 31 January 2026 |                              |            |                                                                                           |                                       |
| Consumer enquiries – subcategories (section 4.2) | Fluoride                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Optional                     | Number     | Single character, only accept '1' for primary descriptor or '2' for secondary descriptors |                                       |
|                                                  | Water hardness                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Optional                     | Number     | Single character, only accept '1' for primary descriptor or '2' for secondary descriptors |                                       |
|                                                  | Water quality report                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Optional                     | Number     | Single character, only accept '1' for primary descriptor or '2' for secondary descriptors |                                       |
|                                                  | Other information                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Optional                     | Number     | Single character, only accept '1' for primary descriptor or '2' for secondary descriptors |                                       |

| Field Name                                                        | Field Description              | Status (mandatory/ optional) | Field Type | Field size                                                                                | Field Example (for illustration only) |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Consumer contact (appearance) subcategories (section 4.3 table 2) | Discoloured brown black orange | Optional                     | Number     | Single character, only accept '1' for primary descriptor or '2' for secondary descriptors | 1                                     |
|                                                                   | Discoloured blue green         | Optional                     | Number     | Single character, only accept '1' for primary descriptor or '2' for secondary descriptors |                                       |
|                                                                   | Particles                      | Optional                     | Number     | Single character, only accept '1' for primary descriptor or '2' for secondary descriptors | 2                                     |
|                                                                   | White – air                    | Optional                     | Number     | Single character, only accept '1' for primary descriptor or '2' for secondary descriptors |                                       |
|                                                                   | White – Chalk                  | Optional                     | Number     | Single character, only accept '1' for primary descriptor or '2' for secondary descriptors |                                       |

| Field Name                                                             | Field Description  | Status (mandatory/ optional) | Field Type | Field size                                                                                | Field Example (for illustration only) |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|                                                                        | Animalcules        | Optional                     | Number     | Single character, only accept '1' for primary descriptor or '2' for secondary descriptors |                                       |
|                                                                        | General conditions | Optional                     | Number     | Single character, only accept '1' for primary descriptor or '2' for secondary descriptors |                                       |
| Consumer contact (taste and odour) subcategories (section 4.4 table 3) | Chlorine           | Optional                     | Number     | Single character, only accept '1' for primary descriptor or '2' for secondary descriptors |                                       |
|                                                                        | Earthy, musty      | Optional                     | Number     | Single character, only accept '1' for primary descriptor or '2' for secondary descriptors |                                       |
|                                                                        | Petrol, diesel     | Optional                     | Number     | Single character, only accept '1' for primary descriptor or '2' for secondary descriptors |                                       |

| Field Name                                                     | Field Description      | Status (mandatory/ optional) | Field Type | Field size                                                                                | Field Example (for illustration only) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|                                                                | Other taste or odour   | Optional                     | Number     | Single character, only accept '1' for primary descriptor or '2' for secondary descriptors |                                       |
|                                                                | Gastroenteritis        | Optional                     | Number     | Single character, only accept '1' for primary descriptor or '2' for secondary descriptors |                                       |
| Consumer contact (illness) subcategories (section 4.5 table 4) | Oral                   | Optional                     | Number     | Single character, only accept '1' for primary descriptor or '2' for secondary descriptors |                                       |
|                                                                | Skin                   | Optional                     | Number     | Single character, only accept '1' for primary descriptor or '2' for secondary descriptors |                                       |
|                                                                | Medical opinion        | Optional                     | Number     | Single character, only accept '1' for primary descriptor or '2' for secondary descriptors |                                       |
|                                                                | Pets and other Animals | Optional                     | Number     | Single character, only accept '1' for primary descriptor or '2' for secondary descriptors |                                       |

| Field Name                                                                            | Field Description                                                                                                       | Status (mandatory/ optional) | Field Type | Field size                                                                                | Field Example (for illustration only) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Consumer contact (drinking water quality concern) subcategories (section 4.6 table 5) | Lead and other Analysis                                                                                                 | Optional                     | Number     | Single character, only accept '1' for primary descriptor or '2' for secondary descriptors |                                       |
|                                                                                       | Lifestyle                                                                                                               | Optional                     | Number     | Single character, only accept '1' for primary descriptor or '2' for secondary descriptors |                                       |
|                                                                                       | Incident related                                                                                                        | Optional                     | Number     | Single character, only accept '1' for primary descriptor or '2' for secondary descriptors |                                       |
|                                                                                       | Campaigns                                                                                                               | Optional                     | Number     | Single character, only accept '1' for primary descriptor or '2' for secondary descriptors |                                       |
| Taste and odour other descriptor                                                      | Enter the taste and odour other descriptor – note this reporting requirement will come into effect from 31 January 2026 | Mandatory from 31 Jan 2026   | text       | Text field, only accept numbers 01–05                                                     | 05                                    |

| Field Name     | Field Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Status (mandatory/ optional) | Field Type | Field size                            | Field Example (for illustration only) |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Notified event | If the contact is related to a notifiable event, include the DWI event reference in the column. For example, 2024-9999                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Optional                     | text       | Free text, 10-character limit         | 2024/9645                             |
| Root cause     | <p>Enter a root cause – only to be used when company has confirmed the root cause, e.g. raw water deterioration, mains burst, fittings inspection or sample results</p> <p>01 (Source – catchment or abstraction)<br/>02 (Treatment)<br/>03 (Storage)<br/>04 (Distribution)<br/>05 (Consumer)<br/>06 (Bulk supply)</p> | Mandatory from 31 Jan 2026   | text       | Text field, only accept numbers 01–06 | 05                                    |

Companies should retain the data from which these returns are prepared for a period of at least three years.