



Briefing: Installing smart water meters across the London Borough of Bromley

Background

- The Thames Water region has been designated by the Environment Agency as a 'seriously water stressed area' and London has one of the highest levels of per capita water consumption in the UK. This puts huge strain on resources and causes environmental problems for local rivers and wildlife.
- During very dry periods demand for water in London already exceeds what is available and this shortfall will increase as the population grows and our climate changes. This is why we are rolling out water meters at the centre of our overall water resource management plans.

Programme summary

- We are aiming to fit circa 50,000 smart water meters on a rolling basis across the borough over the next few years to help protect future water supplies.
- The aim of the programme is to reduce overall water usage and improve leakage detection. It will also put all of our customers in control of their water bills, gradually replacing the existing fixed charges based on outdated rateable values. Smart meters will also enable customers to view their consumption online.
- We plan to start our metering programme in Bromley from January 2017 with the delivery programme to be developed with LB Bromley highways & streetworks teams.
- We will brief all Councillors with information about the programme, the benefits and help and support available for customers ahead of smart meter roll out.
- The majority of meters will be installed in the pavement or road outside the property, where the outside stop valve usually is. The installation can take around two hours, although the water supply will only be turned off for a few minutes. If we are unable to fit a meter outside customers' home due to the nature of the pipework we will make an appointment with customer to check if we can fit a meter inside their home.

Customer engagement and support

- From late December we will start writing to customers on a street by street basis to advise them that we will be installing their smart water meter and include a booklet containing all the information customers will need to know about the changes and support available before moving to a metered account.

- This will be supported by our door to door customer engagement programme through our charity partner Groundwork. From early January 2017 we will start knocking on every customer's door to make sure they know about our metering programme and answer any questions ahead of fitting their smart water meter.
- To help customers adjust to their new meters, we will defer all billing customers on their new meter for the first two years to give customers time to understand their water use and charges, as well as provide support to save water, energy and money.
- Customers will also be able to book a 'smarter' home visit which involves fitting free water-saving gadgets and carrying out a home audit to check for any issues such as a leaking tap or toilet, while also advising on energy savings, and arranging financial support for customers that need help.
- Most of our customer engagement officers are recruited locally and speak a wide range of languages to assist customers, including French, German, Spanish, Mandarin, Urdu and Polish which is the second most common language spoken in LB Bromley.
- We offer a number of tariffs and extra support specifically designed for customers on a water meter called Water Sure, and another tariff to help our most vulnerable and low income families called WaterSure Plus. To find out more about our social tariff schemes and grants customers can visit our website at thameswater.co.uk/support.
- Over the next few years as metering is rolled out across the borough, we will work with LB Bromley and community groups to raise awareness of our programme and the support packages we offer, as well as provide advice on how to get help with bills.
- Below is an illustration of the customer journey from initial awareness and support to receiving comparison bills for two years to eventually switching to a metered account.

Customer Journey

