



**THE COMMUNITY WATER PROJECT**

**TAKE 12**  
**12 PEOPLE** **12**  
**12 WATER BILLS**  
**12 WAYS TO**  
**SAVE MONEY**

**A DIY MANUAL FOR SAVING WATER  
PRODUCED WITH AND FOR LOCAL PEOPLE**

# 12 WAYS TO SAVE WATER

**When John found out his new home had a water meter, he was worried that he was going to end up with a huge bill given the size of his family. "We didn't know how the water meter would affect us as we had five children and there was only me working, so we had a whole year of training the kids," he said.**

The 'training' included the children sharing bath water, as well as each of them having their own bathroom beaker to avoid leaving the tap on when they were brushing their teeth. John said, "After that year we were conscious of how much water we were using, and since then I've never been concerned about the water bill."

John was one of the people, from Brighton and Hove, who

shared their water stories with us, researchers at the University of Sussex. Some, like him, had been saving water for years, others started up new habits following a home water-saving visit from Southern Water. What stood out from the research was how keen people were to save water and the many different approaches they used to do this. We thought we would share what local people are doing to save water and money, particularly as the Government's own water regulator, Ofwat, found that many do not read the information water companies send out. This DIY manual features ideas from conversations with 12 of the people we talked to, and 12 different ways they saved water and money. Some tips may suit you, others not – but why not give one or two a try to find out?

## 1 BOOK A FREE HOME WATER-SAVING VISIT

All 12 households featured in this booklet had taken up the offer of a home water-saving visit from Southern Water. This was a chance to learn about how they used water in the home and discover areas where usage could be potentially reduced. Here is what some of them told us about the visit:

**I was quite concerned, because my bills do come in quite high and we are on the water meter, so I thought it would be a good idea to have the water visit.**

**The most useful part of that visit was just ideas of showing the kids how much water they are using day to day. It's definitely helped my son, he is more aware now.**

**The showerhead and tap were all using a lot of water so he changed them to make them more efficient. I had been quite dubious about it before, but I thought the home visit was a really good thing. I rang my daughter and told her.**



### GETTING HELP IN CUTTING WATER USE AND BILLS

Southern Water is offering free home water-saving visits in Brighton and Hove for people with water meters. The water engineer will spend time looking at how you use water in the home, as well as flow rates, to come up with ideas for cutting use and bills. Where possible, they will fit up to £100 of free water-saving products in your bathroom and kitchen, such as a new showerhead. If you haven't had a home water-saving visit, or know someone who could benefit from one, call 0333 240 0255 to find out more, or go online at [www.southernwater.co.uk/home-visit](http://www.southernwater.co.uk/home-visit)

## 2 CHECK OUT DIFFERENT WATER TARIFFS

Water meters are designed so people pay for how much water they use. But if your family has a particular need for additional water or you are on a low income, you may be able to reduce your bills by moving to a discounted water tariff or a capped water tariff. Southern Water will also discuss individual payment plans to ensure customers are only paying what they can afford.

**Now I get a discount so I am only paying £30 a month. I don't earn that much money so it helps.**

**I'm on that WaterSure discount scheme where if you're on a low income and you've got so many children under a certain age, you can get your water bill capped.**

**I'm a pensioner and I've got lots of things wrong with me. I was paying £70-odd a month, I think, for water and now it's £30.**

### HELP FOR THOSE ON LOW INCOMES

Southern Water has a number of schemes to help people who are struggling with their water bills. For example, the **WaterSure** scheme provides a capped water bill for households who are claiming certain benefits but also have special needs for additional water, such as having a large family or a health condition. Under **Water Direct**, eligible households can have their water bills paid directly from their benefits in order to help with budgeting. **NewStart** can help people pay off their water bill debt by Southern Water matching any payments made towards arrears. The **Essentials** tariff is designed to help people who are struggling to pay their water service charges and can lead to a discount of between 20–90% depending on income.

Please call 0800 027 0363 for further information or go online at [www.southernwater.co.uk/difficulty-paying-your-bill](http://www.southernwater.co.uk/difficulty-paying-your-bill)

## 3 MONITOR YOUR WATER USE

Most water meters are read twice a year by the water company, but some people like to keep an eye on how much water they are using between bills. Some meters are inside the home, but most are situated in a small chamber under a metal or plastic cover outside – for example on the public footpath or even in your front garden. But if the meter is covered with a large cast iron cover you should not lift this. To find out how to find and read your meter, see the Southern Water website at [www.southernwater.co.uk/your-meter-reading](http://www.southernwater.co.uk/your-meter-reading)

**The man from the water company showed me how the water meter in my flat changes when you turn the tap on full. So I keep an eye on that, but I also now listen to the noise of the water coming out, so I can hear how much my children are using.**

**I was just keeping an eye on the water meter. But when I got my bills I was seeing I was always in credit. So, I wasn't so worried.**





## 4 CHECK FOR LEAKS



If you have a surprisingly high bill it's possible that there is a leak somewhere. Go online at [www.southernwater.co.uk/bill-higher-than-expected](http://www.southernwater.co.uk/bill-higher-than-expected) to get help in identifying a problem, before it adds too much to your bills.

**I was really worried because my sister had a leaking tap and didn't realise. She got one bill, and it was like £600. I thought, "There's no way I want a bill like that."**

**We were being careful with the water but the bill had still gone up. We kept thinking, "Why is it getting so high?" – and then found the leak outside.**

**The guy told us when he did the water visit to put a piece of toilet paper on the back of the toilet bowl and leave it for ten minutes. If it's wet you know the toilet is dripping.**

## 5 REUSE WATER

One way to save water is to consider ways to reuse it. Some families share bath water. Others fill up a watering can for the garden while they wait for water to run hot in their kitchen sink.

**Everybody has showers now, but if we do have a bath, we'd get in one after the other to save water and money.**

**My children are 17 and 13 – I don't mind getting in one of their baths, because they're not exactly dirty.**

**I was wasting quite a lot of water waiting for our shower to get hot. But now I have a bucket that we put the cold water in and use that for watering the plants.**



## 6 THE DIRT CHALLENGE

Cut down on washing if you can. Check things are dirty before washing them and encourage kids to be sensible.

**The kids now sort out their own towels – they hang them up and then reuse them the next day. I am not washing so many now.**

**The children stay in their school clothes until they have their bath, or if they don't have one they get into their pyjamas. So, I just have that one wash to put on.**

**I get sick and tired of having to wash his school jacket so often. So I now just get the wet sponge, wet it all over, and then hang it up so it can dry and can be worn the next day.**



## 8 CONSIDER A WASHING-UP BOWL

A dishwasher – particularly a new one – can be an efficient way of doing the dishes. But if you can't afford one, or don't have the space, there are plenty of simple things you can do to wash efficiently.

## 7 WASH WITH FULL LOADS

Running a washing machine half empty still uses water and energy. Always try to do a full load: you might be surprised by how many coloured things can be washed together, particularly at a low temperature.

**I just save my whites up till the end of the week. So that's just like one wash.**

**If it's not a full load, I'll wait for the next morning, and then they can bung their pyjamas in it. So, it saves making another load of washing.**



**Because I work in a restaurant I know how to save water. I use two bowls. One bowl I put soap in, and then use a sponge to wash the dishes, one by one, and then leave them on the side. The other bowl has clean water and I use it to rinse off the soap.**

**If the water does get dirty you can easily empty and refill a small bowl. Whereas, if you did it in your sink you've got to wait for all of that water to go away, and then refill it all up again.**



# 9&10

## RETHINK THE BATH... RETHINK THE SHOWER

We get it, baths can be very relaxing but generally they use more water than a shower. You don't have to give up your soaks, just consider reducing how often you have a bath and how much water you use. But be careful about the shower too. One study showed that on average in the UK we spend eight minutes in it. That's nearly the equivalent of a bath in terms of water and energy costs, and a power shower can be double that. If you arrange a home water-saving visit (see page 3), the engineer can give you a free four-minute shower timer and, if you have a suitable shower, a special head that uses less water.



**It became that we can't afford to run a bath, so we stuck to showers. But in the end, the shower became normal ... the everyday thing.**

**Normally, we both shower, but I do like to have a bath at least once a week, just to have a soak.**

**When the water bill went through the roof, we thought, "Okay, we'll do the shower," so that's what we do. And you know what, we don't miss having baths.**

# 11

## DON'T FORGET YOUR TEETH

Lots of people knew about saving water by not running water when brushing teeth, but not all...

**Once I changed to a shower and stopped letting water run when I was cleaning my teeth and things like that, I noticed a financial difference.**

**My daughter came home from school and was like, "Did you realise that when you're running the tap while cleaning your teeth you're using this much water?"**

**So, the children run the tap to wet the toothbrush, turn it off, brush, then run it at the end to rinse.**



# 12 BE CREATIVE IN THE GARDEN

Choose plants that don't mind dry weather and, if you have the space, think about having a water butt to catch free rain water. As part of the home water-saving visit you can purchase a discounted water butt and have it fitted free (see back page). If you have a paddling pool, think carefully about how you use it. Using the cover and a filter system can mean you don't need to replace water too often.



**I've run a pipe along the shed to get all the rain off its roof for two water butts.**

**Although I love my garden and I like to see my plants growing, but I now think it's not totally essential that things get watered.**

**The only time we used more water than I ever wanted was when family visited and we put up a little paddling pool in the garden. We didn't have a cover so had to keep filling it up. Just from it being used that one summer it was a good £200-odd extra on the water bill – I didn't use it again!**

## WHY SAVE WATER?

Saving money was the main reason why most people we spoke to wanted to cut back on non-essential water use. They hated seeing money being flushed down the drain. But some also voiced concerns about water shortages – both here and in other parts of the world. An Environment Agency report highlighted homes in the South East River Basin for having some of the highest levels of water use in England, but the region has less water per person than Morocco. Sussex is a water-stressed area and for various reasons including a changing climate and increasing demand for water, this looks set to get worse. By starting a conversation about water, we can start to discuss how to save it now, and for future generations.

**When I got the meter, I was concerned about the money. But now I'm also doing my bit, being as frugal as I can with the water and using it to the best of my ability rather than just sloshing it around willy-nilly.**

**People often think, "It's there, let's just use it." I'm a bit like that myself, with the washing and things, but I'm also quite aware that water is an important part of the environment and you've got to not waste it.**

**There's been no rain, and when you look out the window there's yellow grass. And, I'm like, how quickly that's happened because of all this heat and everyone says that we're a rainy country. Not in the summer any more.**

**"As you're running the tap, you can just watch the money and the water sort of draining away."**

## BUT WHAT ABOUT WATER YOU NEED?

We all use water in our daily routines – washing, cooking, cleaning, bathing, etc. Some of the people we have included in this booklet had very high water usage, but still managed to reduce their use by cutting back in areas that were not so important to them – such as using a water can rather than a hose in the garden. But others struggled to reduce their water use due to physical and mental health issues, including obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). Even if you can't reduce your water use that much, you may be eligible for a discount or could agree a monthly payment plan to make your bill more manageable.



See pages 2 and 4 of this booklet for information on the water visits and discounted water tariffs, as well as the back page for further information and advice.

## THE COMMUNITY WATER PROJECT

### STARTING A CONVERSATION ABOUT WATER

The Community Water Project is aimed at supporting households in reducing water use and bills – particularly those on low incomes. It is being run by a partnership of Brighton and Hove City Council, Southern

## AND HELP IN MANAGING WATER DEBT?

A number of the people we spoke to were also behind on paying their water bill. They were aware that water companies are not allowed to cut people off if they get into debt, but that didn't mean they were comfortable owing money. The people were keen to sort out their water debt which is why they signed up for the home water-saving visit to try and reduce future bills. Some of them also spoke to specially trained staff at Southern Water to find out if they were eligible for a discount or were able to spread their bill over a longer time period to make their monthly payments more manageable.

**I do think a lot of people are trying to manage their money and sort their debt issues out ... I was able to set up a water payment plan of £35 a month. It was such a relief.**

**The good thing about the water was we paid it monthly. That was a relief really, because the water bill in one hit, for someone like us,**

**is not a good idea, so it worked out alright for us.**

**It was a weight lifted off the shoulders because at the end of the day you just don't want to be in debt. So once it's been discussed, once payment is on its way, you know where you stand, everybody's happy.**

Water, the Consumer Council for Water and researchers at the University of Sussex.

This DIY water manual is produced with and for the communities of Brighton

and Hove. The tips in this booklet are based on conversations with people who have had a water visit.



## FURTHER INFORMATION & HELP

**Booking a home water-saving visit:** call 0333 240 0255 to find out more, or go online at [www.southernwater.co.uk/home-visit](http://www.southernwater.co.uk/home-visit) (if you wish, when you arrange your visit you can also order a discounted water butt that can be fitted for free)

**Checking eligibility for reduced water tariffs or a monthly payment plan:** call 0800 027 0363 for further information, or go online at [www.southernwater.co.uk/difficulty-paying-your-bill](http://www.southernwater.co.uk/difficulty-paying-your-bill)

**Checking for a water leak:** [www.southernwater.co.uk/testing-for-a-leak](http://www.southernwater.co.uk/testing-for-a-leak)

**Reading your water meter:** [www.southernwater.co.uk/your-meter-reading](http://www.southernwater.co.uk/your-meter-reading)

**Brighton and Hove City Council Housing Team:** call 01273 293030, or email [housing.customerservices@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:housing.customerservices@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

**Citizens Advice Bureau:** call 0300330, or visit [www.brightonhovcab.org.uk](http://www.brightonhovcab.org.uk)

**Moneyworks** (a council-funded project offering debt advice to people in Brighton and Hove): call 0800 9887037 Monday 3–7pm, Tuesday and Friday 10am–2pm, Wednesday and Thursday 12.30–4.30pm, or find out more at [www.advicebrighton-hove.org.uk/moneyworks](http://www.advicebrighton-hove.org.uk/moneyworks)

**St Luke's Advice Service** (a charity offering advice to those in need, including help with disability and carers' allowances and support): call 01273 549203 to make an appointment

**Brighton Unemployed Centre Families Project:** call 01273 671213/601211, or drop in to the Centre, Tuesday to Friday 10am–4pm, at 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 0GY

**Consumer Council for Water:** call 0300 034 2222, Monday–Friday 8.30am–5pm, or email [enquiries@ccwater.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ccwater.org.uk), or find out more at [www.cewater.org.uk](http://www.cewater.org.uk)

### General water advice

**Southern Water:** [www.southernwater.co.uk/savewater](http://www.southernwater.co.uk/savewater)

**Consumer Council for Water:** [www.cewater.org.uk/households](http://www.cewater.org.uk/households)

**Ofwat:** [www.ofwat.gov.uk/households](http://www.ofwat.gov.uk/households)

Working with local people in association with

