

# Replacing lead and common supply pipes

## How do I know if I have lead pipes?

If your home was built before 1970, there's a chance that your water supply pipe is made from lead. This is the pipe that brings water into your home from our water main in the street.

These days, lead pipes are no longer used for health reasons. Medical experts believe that traces of lead in your water can be harmful, especially to young children and unborn babies.

However, there is an easy way to check to see whether your water supply pipe is made of lead.

Grab a torch and look for the pipe that runs from outside to your stop tap (for the majority of homes this will be under the kitchen sink, or in a downstairs toilet).

Lead pipes are pretty distinctive. They are dark grey (underneath any paint), soft, and easily marked.

Even if the rest of your pipes are made from copper, your supply pipe could still be lead.

If this simple check arouses your suspicions, do be sure to get a second opinion from a professional plumber before deciding on whether to replace them.

## Lead and common supply pipe replacement scheme

If your supply pipe is made of lead, we would advise you to consider replacing it. If you apply to replace your lead supply pipe under our scheme, we'll replace the lead pipes that we own free of charge. We'll also connect the new supply pipe to the water main free of charge. We can only do our work when you have finished your work.

Your home will be fed by one of two types of supply pipe:

- a separate supply pipe; or
- a common supply pipe.

We've explained the difference between both of these pipes on the following pages.

Before applying for our lead pipe replacement scheme, be sure to get a quote from a plumber so you have a good understanding of how much this will cost.

## How do I apply for the scheme?

To apply for the scheme you must be a United Utilities customer and be able to provide us with your water account number (which you can find on your water bill).

You can apply online at [unitedutilities.com/leadpipereplacement](https://unitedutilities.com/leadpipereplacement). Alternatively call us on **0345 072 6082** and we'll register your application over the telephone. We will then confirm if your property is eligible for a free connection.

Lines are open between 9am and 5pm, Monday-Friday.

Sometimes we are not able to accept customers on to the scheme. For example, properties being converted to flats/apartments, or properties which are too far from a water main. Please call us for further advice on **0345 072 6082**.

The scheme is intended for domestic customers, but we will consider applications from commercial customers.

## How to contact us about the information in this leaflet



[unitedutilities.com/leadpipereplacement](https://unitedutilities.com/leadpipereplacement)



**0345 072 6082**

Opening hours:  
9am - 5pm Mon to Fri

If you have hearing or speech difficulties and use a textphone please dial 18001 followed by the number you require.

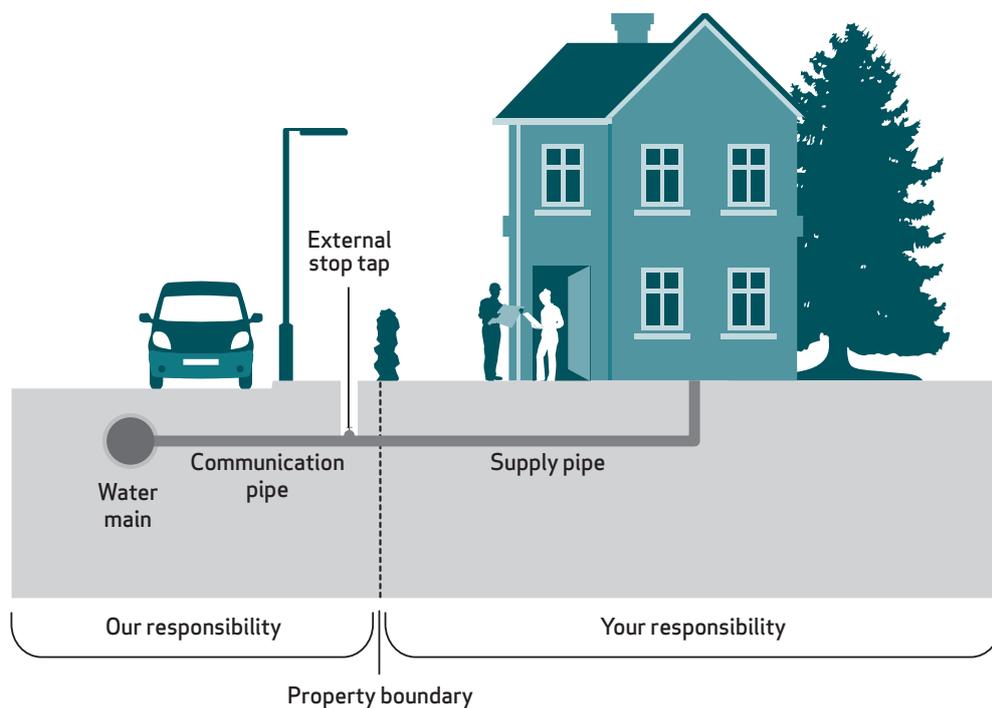


**Lead and common supply pipe scheme**  
United Utilities Water Developer Services  
Windermere House  
Lingley Mere Business Park  
Warrington  
WA5 3LP

## Separate lead supply pipes

(Diagram is for illustration purposes only)

**Please note:** your property boundary marks the point at which you become responsible for single water supply pipes.



## Separate lead supply pipes

The diagram above shows who is responsible for the water supply pipes on a separate supply.

Through our lead pipe replacement scheme, we will replace the length of pipe that is our responsibility and also provide a connection to the water main free of charge. Before applying for the scheme, you need to think about what you must do - especially as you will need to pay to replace the lead pipes you are responsible for.

## What do I have to do?

**Important:** Before you arrange with your plumber to lay a new supply pipe (and undertake any necessary work to the plumbing inside your property) please return the enclosed application form to us. Please don't start work until we have sent you an acceptance letter - just in case there's a technical reason why the project can't go ahead.

You or your plumber will have to lay a new supply pipe (usually to within 1m of your existing service pipe/stop tap) and do any necessary work to the plumbing inside your home. We will advise you where and how to lay your new supply pipe.

When you have completed this work, you need to contact us to arrange for one of our inspectors to check

the work (unless a WIAPS plumber is carrying out the work, in which case no inspection is required). This is to make sure the work meets the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations (these are explained later in the factsheet). There is no charge for this service. Please give us at least five working days notice for an appointment and that you, or if possible, your plumber are present at the inspection. **Before arranging an appointment, please ensure you have met all requirements as shown in point 5 on the 'Step-by-step' process on page 5.**

- If the work fails the inspection, you will need to arrange with your plumber to bring the work up to standard. You'll then have to ask for another inspection.
- When your work has passed we'll arrange for the connection to be completed. We aim to do this within six weeks of your work passing inspection or receipt of your WIAP (Water industry approved) certificate. If there are engineering difficulties, or we have to lay a new length of water main, this will take longer.
- One of the conditions of the lead and common supply pipe replacement scheme is that you arrange to have your old pipework disconnected from your water supply (usually within your property). This is to protect you from leaks and from the risk of contamination from

any stagnant water. Your plumber must be present at the time of the connection to disconnect the old supply and transfer the internal pipe work onto the new supply. If your plumber cannot be present, the point of disconnection should be excavated to allow inspection. If not, the connection will not be completed.

- **If your relaid supply pipe does not meet the required standards and we have to make return visits, we may charge you for the extra visits.**

If you do not disconnect your old water supply pipe as required by the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations, and we have to do the work ourselves, we may charge you.

### Please note:

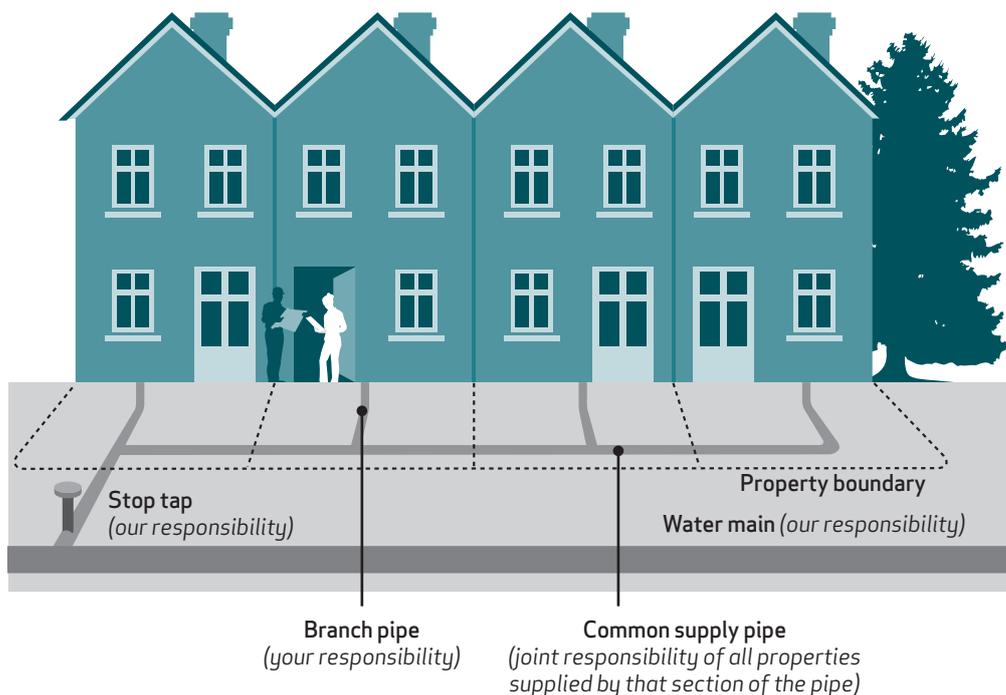
You are free to use any plumber to replace your lead pipes. We recommend that you use a member of the Water Industry Approved Plumber Scheme. Visit the website: [www.wras.co.uk/wiaps](http://www.wras.co.uk/wiaps)

**It is your plumber's responsibility to complete the internal plumbing work to transfer you on to the new supply.**

## Common supply pipes (CSP)

(Diagram is for illustration purposes only)

**Please note:** your property boundary marks the point at which you become responsible for single water supply pipes.



### Common supply pipes

Many older properties, particularly terraced houses, are served by a common supply pipe. This pipe provides water to a number of houses from one single connection to the water main. This is shown on the diagram above.

These supply pipes are usually made of lead or iron and are often too small for the water needs of modern kitchens and bathrooms. If you are on this type of system, you might notice that your water flow is poor and is affected when your neighbours use their water.

We are responsible for the communication pipe from our water main to the boundary of the street where our main is. Common supply pipes are the joint responsibility of each property fed by the communication pipe. You alone are responsible for the branch pipe which brings water from the common supply pipe to your home or to your outbuilding.

Ideally, we would like all our customers to have their own separate supply pipes from our mains. Through our lead and common supply pipe replacement scheme, we will:

- provide a new connection to our water main; and

- lay a new length of pipe from our main to the boundary of the property where our main is.

These services are offered free of charge subject to acceptance onto our lead and common supply pipe replacement scheme.

Before applying for the scheme, you need to think about what you must do - especially as you will need to pay to replace the lead pipes you are responsible for.

### What do I have to do?

Important: Before you arrange with your plumber to lay a new supply pipe (and undertake any necessary work to the plumbing inside your property) please return the enclosed application form to us. Please don't start work until we have sent you an acceptance letter - just in case there's a technical reason why the project can't go ahead.

You or your plumber will have to lay a new separate supply pipe from your house to the boundary of the property where our main is (we'll let you know where to lay your pipe during the application stage). You will also have to do any necessary work to the plumbing inside your property. We will advise you where and how to lay your new supply pipe.

Don't forget you will also need to liaise with your neighbours if it appears the new water supply pipe needs to cross their land.

When you have completed this work, you need to contact us to arrange for one of our inspectors to check the work. This is to make sure the work meets the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations. There is no charge for this service. Please give us at least five working days notice for an appointment and make sure that you, or if possible, your plumber are present at this inspection. **Before arranging an appointment, please ensure you have met all requirements as shown in point 5 on the 'Step-by-step' process on page 5.**

- If the work fails the inspection, you will need to arrange with your plumber to bring the work up to standard. You will then need to ask for another inspection.
- When your work has passed we will arrange for the connection to be completed. We aim to do this within six weeks of your work passing inspection or receipt of your WIAP (Water industry approved) certificate. If there are engineering difficulties, or we have to lay a new length of water main, this will take longer.
- Your plumber must be present to disconnect the old branch pipe from the common supply pipe, and to transfer the internal pipework onto the new single supply.
- One of the conditions of the lead and common supply pipe replacement scheme is that you arrange to have your old branch pipe disconnected from the common supply pipe. This is to protect you and your neighbours from leaks and from the risk of contamination from any stagnant water. Your plumber must be present at the time of the connection to disconnect the old supply and transfer the internal pipe work onto the new supply. If your plumber cannot be present, the point of disconnection should be excavated to allow inspection. If not, the connection will not be completed.
- **If your relaid supply pipe does not meet the required standards and we have to make return visits, we may charge you for the extra visits.**

If you do not disconnect your old branch pipe as required by the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations, and we have to do the work ourselves, we may charge you.

## Your factsheet refers to the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999, why is this important?

It's important that any work done to the water supply pipe meets the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations. There is a separate factsheet 'How to lay a new water supply pipe' that explains how to carry out the work. It describes the standards which any work on the water network must meet. If you apply for the scheme, we will send you this factsheet. You should give it to your plumber so they know the work must meet the regulations.

**We will not make the connection to our water main until all your work meets these standards.**

## Will replacing lead pipes affect my electrical earthing?

The safe earthing of your home and electrical appliances is your responsibility. In the past, the lead water supply pipe was often used as an electrical earth for homes. But removing the lead pipes may leave your home unsafe if there is an electrical fault. Please ask an electrician for advice on electrical earthing.

## What if I've already replaced my internal plumbing?

If you've already replaced the pipes in your home, you may still have to replace the underground pipe between your house and the street. Under the scheme, we will provide a new pipe and connection to the water main free of charge. But you do have to replace the length of underground pipe that you are responsible for, up to the first drinking water tap.

## Can you recommend a qualified plumber?

You are free to use any plumber to replace your lead pipes. We recommend that you use a member of the Water Industry Approved Plumber Scheme. Visit the website [www.wras.co.uk/wiaps](http://www.wras.co.uk/wiaps).

Please note: you may need to search under the 'groundworkers' section to find a contractor who specialises in laying service pipes. See the website for details.

## Are there any grants to help with the costs?

As well as the free services we offer, your local council may be able to give you a grant to help with the cost of laying a new supply pipe. You should contact your local council before returning the application form and they will be able to advise you. Usually, the Environmental Health or Housing Department look after any grant scheme.

## Will there be any disruption?

There may be some disruption due to digging to replace pipes, but we will do all we can to keep this to a minimum. We might also have to shut off the water supply to you or your neighbours for a short time. We will tell you before we do this.

## What if I don't want to replace my lead plumbing?

A simple way of reducing the amount of lead in your water is to run your tap for a few minutes, especially if the water has been standing in the pipes for a long time, such as overnight. Try not to waste the water that you run off. You can use it in other ways, such as watering the garden. But, the only way to make sure there is no lead in your water is to replace any lead pipework.

## What if I have a water meter?

If you currently have a water meter it will need to be transferred onto the new pipework. If your water meter is currently located outside your property (usually in an underground box in the footpath), we will arrange to transfer the meter onto the new supply after we have made the new connection.

If your meter is located inside your property, your plumber must transfer the meter onto the new pipework, immediately after the new connection has been made.

There is a separate factsheet 'Relocating your water meter installation specifications', which explains how to do this. If you make an application for a new connection and have an internal meter, we will send you the factsheet, which you should give to your plumber.

After your connection has been made, we will need to inspect the meter to ensure the installation meets our requirements and also to replace the security seal on the meter. If the installation is not to the required standard, we will install a new meter outside your property and you may be charged for this.

## Can the meter be moved outside?

If you want the meter moved from inside to outside, we can do this after the new connection has been made. There is a charge for this, as we cannot use the same meter and have to supply a new water meter. We will also have to amend our billing systems.

If you would like us to move your meter outside your home, please indicate this on the application form. Please be aware there will be a charge for this service (call us on 0345 072 6082 for details).

## Step by step process for dealing with your application

**Important:** Unfortunately, due to restrictions contained within the New Roads and Streetworks Act 1991, we are unable to carry out works on a public footpath or road if it has been resurfaced in the last three to five years. There may be instances when an application is refused due to this regulation.

1. Please check to see which type of pipe is currently serving your home, ie: is it a CSP or separate supply pipe?
2. Call us on **0345 072 6082** to register your interest or intention to replace your common or lead service pipe. We will normally confirm immediately if you are accepted. Alternatively, complete the attached application form or apply online at **[unitedutilities.com/LeadpipeReplacement](https://www.wras.co.uk/LeadpipeReplacement)**.

**Please do not start any work until we have confirmed that your property is accepted onto the scheme.**

3. We will send a letter to you to confirm your acceptance, and enclose helpful factsheets, including **"How to lay a new water supply pipe"** which has all the technical information you, or your plumber, will need to lay the pipe. It is very important that these guidelines are followed.
4. You will then need to appoint a qualified plumber to replace the common or lead pipe in your home up to the boundary of your property. You are free to use any plumber to replace your lead pipes. We recommend that you use a member of the Water Industry Approved Plumber Scheme. Visit the website [www.wras.co.uk/wiaps](http://www.wras.co.uk/wiaps)
5. Once your plumber has completed the work, please contact us on **0345 072 6082** to arrange for us to carry out an inspection. We are available to inspect the work Monday to Friday 8am - 4pm (including bank holidays). However, if your plumber is WIAPS approved, no inspection will be required, you will just need to return your Request for Work form (RFW5) fully completed along with their WIAPS certificate and we'll go straight to step 7.

Before agreeing a date to carry out the inspection, you must answer 'yes' to the following questions:

- Is the internal pipe work laid to a minimum depth of 750mm (2 foot 6 inches)?
- Is the pipework laid to a minimum of 1m away from any trees, lamp posts, lighting columns etc?
- Is the trench lined with soft earth or sand?
- Is the trench fully exposed?
- Is the pipe work insulated and ducted where it enters the building?
- Is the ducting sealed at both ends?
- Has the stop tap and drain off valve been fitted at the point of entry?
- Has the pipework been laid under the wall or hedge at the property boundary?
- Is there at least 2 foot of pipe coiled up at the boundary?
- Is the end of the pipe located at the edge of the property boundary sealed?

If you answer NO to any of the above, it will fail the inspection and your application will be refused. Please ensure you can answer yes to all of these questions before calling us to arrange your inspection. If the work fails the inspection, you will need to arrange with your plumber to bring the work up to standard. You'll then have to ask for another inspection.

6. Once the work passes inspection, you can fill in any holes/trenches within your boundary.
7. We then connect your pipe to the water main (this can take up to 6 weeks after the inspection or the certificate is submitted). Please note: if we encounter engineering difficulties, or have to lay a new length of water main, this could take up to six months to complete the connection.
8. If you're on a common supply, your plumber must be present at the time of the connection. They will be required to disconnect your branch pipe from the shared pipe, and they will also connect your internal pipe work onto the new supply.
9. If you're on a single supply, we will permanently disconnect the old supply at the same time as we make the new connection. You must arrange for your plumber to disconnect your old service pipe within your property and transfer your internal pipe work onto the new supply.

This leaflet is one in a series of publications containing useful information for our customers. Others that may be of interest to you are:

- **A simple guide to pipes, drains and sewers**
- **A guide to paying your water bill**
- **Water meter application pack**
- **Testing your household water meter**
- **A simple guide to your water meter**
- **A guide to our ExtraCare services**
- **A guide to using water wisely**
- **WaterSure application pack**
- **Our complaints procedure**
- **Our standards of service**

You can download any of our leaflets from our website: **[unitedutilities.com/leaflets](http://unitedutilities.com/leaflets)**. Alternatively, please call our 24-hour automated leaflet request line on **0800 980 6050**, or write to: United Utilities, PO Box 459, Warrington WA55 1WB.

All our booklets are available in large print, Braille and on audio CD or cassette. Please call us on **0345 672 2888** to order a leaflet in any of these formats.

If English is not your first language, our key booklets are also available in Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Chinese, Bengali and Punjabi on our website **[unitedutilities.com/translations](http://unitedutilities.com/translations)**



### **About us**

United Utilities is the North West's water company. We keep the taps flowing and toilets flushing for seven million customers every day. From Crewe to Carlisle, we work hard behind the scenes to help your life flow smoothly.

United Utilities Water Limited, Haweswater House, Lingley Mere Business Park, Lingley Green Avenue, Warrington WA5 3LP.  
Registered in England and Wales. Registered Number 2366678.

# Replacing lead and common supply pipes

## Application form

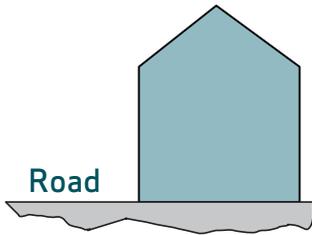


Call us on 0345 072 6082 to apply for our scheme. Alternatively, complete this application form and return to us at the address on the reverse.

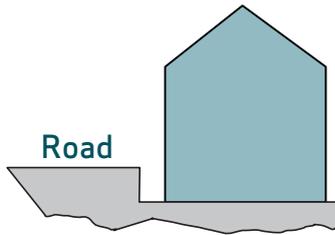
| Applicant details  |   |   |                                     |   |
|--|---|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| Name   |   |   |                                     |   |
| Address  |   |   |                                     |   |
|  |   |   |                                     |   |
|  |   |   |                                     |   |
| Postcode   |   |   |                                     |   |
| Telephone  |   |   |                                     |   |
| Property address (if different from above)   |   |   |                                     |   |
| Name   |   |   |                                     |   |
| Address  |   |   |                                     |   |
|  |   |   |                                     |   |
|  |   |   |                                     |   |
| Postcode   |   |   |                                     |   |
| Telephone  |   |   |                                     |   |
| Property reference number<br>(shown on the top of your bill)   |   |   |                                     |   |
| Please provide details of your plumber/contractor if known   |   |   |                                     |   |
| Name   |   |   |                                     |   |
| Address  |   |   |                                     |   |
|  |   |   |                                     |   |
|  |   |   |                                     |   |
| Postcode   |   |   |                                     |   |
| Telephone  |   |   |                                     |   |
| <b>This property is: (please tick the the appropriate box)</b>   | <input type="checkbox"/> A house              | <input type="checkbox"/> A flat/apartment     | <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial | <input type="checkbox"/> A conversion                       |
| <b>And the property is connected to:</b>   | <input type="checkbox"/> A common supply pipe | <input type="checkbox"/> A separate supply    |                                     |   |
| <b>Is your supply pipe made of lead?</b>   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes                  | <input type="checkbox"/> No                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know |   |
| <b>Are you replacing a lead pipe</b>   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes                  | <input type="checkbox"/> No                   |                                     |   |
| <b>Do you have a water meter?</b>  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes                  | <input type="checkbox"/> No                   |                                     |   |
| <b>If yes, where is it fitted?</b>   | <input type="checkbox"/> Inside the property  | <input type="checkbox"/> Outside the property |                                     |   |
| <b>Would you like us to move your meter from inside your home to outside?</b><br>(Please be aware there will be a charge for this service - call us on 0345 072 6082 for details).   |   |   |                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Please tick ONE of the following statements and sign and date below.   |   |   |                                     |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Property on a common supply pipe:</b> I intend to provide a separate service pipe to the boundary of my property and to replace any internal lead pipework, at least as far as the first drinking water tap. Please supply a separate service to my property. I will remove the branches from the existing common supply pipe and note that if the pipe is not removed I will be liable for any costs incurred to remove the pipework. I declare that the expected life of the property is not less than 15 years. |   |   |                                     |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Property on existing separate supply:</b> I intend to replace that part of the existing lead service pipe within the property and any other lead pipework, at least as far as the first drinking water tap. Please replace that part of the lead service pipe to my property, which is owned by United Utilities.  |   |   |                                     |   |
| <b>Signature</b>   |   |   |                                     |   |
| <b>Print name</b>  |   | <b>Date</b>                                   | DD                                  | MM YY   |

## Property details

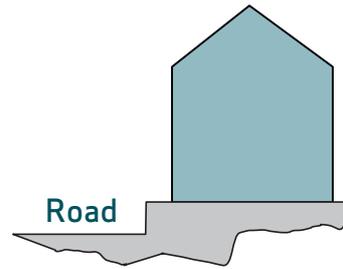
To help us with your application, please select the elevation type most like your property, using the tick box:



Normal elevation



Lowered elevation

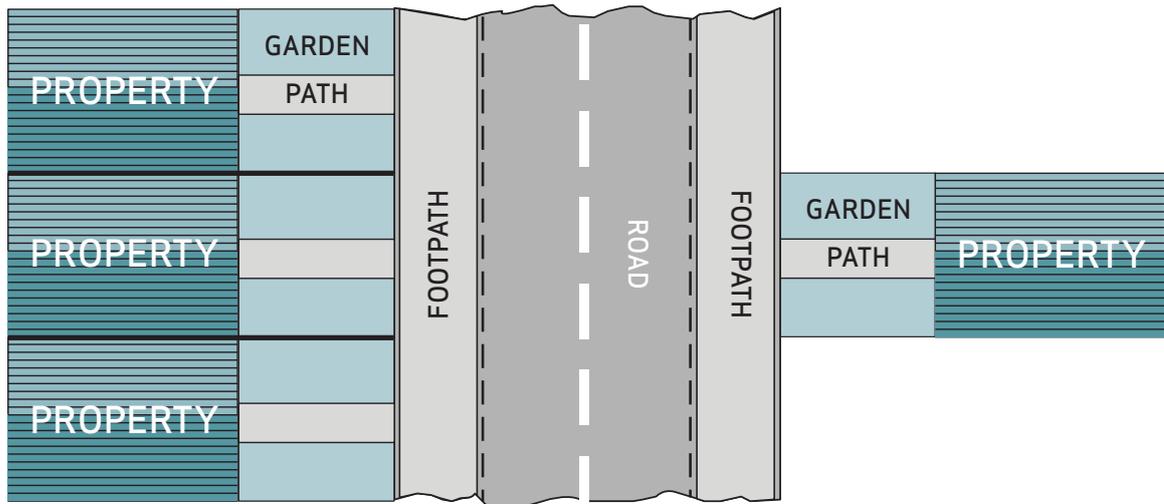


Raised elevation

Mark the diagram below with an 'X' to show where your external stop tap is located.

Common supply

Separate lead supply



Please tell us if the property is:

- On a busy main road  On a regular bus route  Close to a pedestrian crossing

Please ensure that all sections of the form are completed before returning your application form

Please note:

The new service pipe must not be installed until you have received authorisation from United Utilities, and all plumbing work must be carried out to comply with current Water Supply Regulations 1999.

Please return your completed application form to:

Lead and common supply pipe scheme, United Utilities Water, Developer Services, Windermere House, Lingley Mere Business Park, Warrington WA5 3LP

If you need any help with your application form, call us on **0345 072 6082**

### About us

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