United Utilities Water Limited
Haweswater House
Lingley Mere Business Park
Lingley Green Avenue
Great Sankey
Warrington WA5 3LP

Telephone: 01925 237000

unitedutilities.com

Our ref: EIR/ID654
Date: 17/02/2026
Email: EIRRequests@uuplc.co.uk

Dear [redacted],

Thank you for your request for environmental information. We appreciate your interest, and we want to let you know that your request has been carefully considered in accordance with the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR).

Your request(s):

1. policies or procedures for assessing and accepting pharmaceutical trade effluent.
2. consideration of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs), antimicrobials, metabolites, or solvent residues when setting trade effluent conditions.
3. monitoring or reporting of pharmaceutical substances or antimicrobial resistance in wastewater or sludge (summaries or reports preferred rather than raw data).
4. any infrastructure or treatment measures implemented or planned to mitigate environmental risks from pharmaceutical residues.
5. interactions with the Environment Agency or DEFRA relating to pharmaceutical trade effluent or residues in wastewater.

Our response:

We have answered each of your questions in turn below.

1. Policies or procedures for assessing and accepting pharmaceutical trade effluent

UU requires all businesses discharging trade effluent to public sewers to hold a Trade Effluent Consent under the Water Industry Act 1991, this includes pharmaceutical companies. The consent process involves the following steps:

- Submission of a detailed application via the water retailer, including effluent composition
- Risk-based assessment to set consent conditions, which may include limits for specific pollutants
- Pre-treatment requirements (where necessary) to reduce pollutant strength before discharge

2. Consideration of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs), antimicrobials, metabolites, or solvent residues when setting trade effluent conditions

When assessing trade effluent derived from pharmaceutical companies, we review declared contaminants and follow Environment Agency framework H1 assessment/screening process for hazardous/priority substances with a formal environmental quality standard (EQS). This helps understand the factors that influence consent conditions and/or monitoring measures. Further details can be found at the following link Surface water pollution risk assessment for your environmental permit - GOV.UK.

3. Monitoring or reporting of pharmaceutical substances or antimicrobial resistance in wastewater or sludge (summaries or reports preferred rather than raw data)

We do not monitor for pharmaceuticals or antimicrobial resistance in wastewater or sludge, outside of the CIP programme. For details of this programme please see question 5.

4. Any infrastructure or treatment measures implemented or planned to mitigate environmental risks from pharmaceutical residues

Our wastewater treatment processes include biological treatment and sludge handling designed to reduce organic and chemical loads. All of these processes are managed within a clearly defined regulatory framework, with the works operating to permits and numeric standards set by the Environment Agency.

We may also require on-site pre-treatment before a trader discharges effluent to the foul sewer. In these cases, we would work with the trader to ensure that the pretreatment is appropriate for the effluent.

5. Interactions with the Environment Agency or DEFRA relating to pharmaceutical trade effluent or residues in wastewater

We regularly engage with the Environment Agency on matters relating to trade effluent, including pharmaceutical residues and antimicrobial resistance (AMR). This includes engagement on compliance reporting, joint investigations, and participation in industry-wide initiatives.

United Utilities is one of the water companies contributing to the UK Water Industry Research (UKWIR) Chemicals Investigation programme (CIP), a long-running research initiative looking at trace chemicals – including pharmaceuticals and AMR-related issues – in wastewater and biosolids. CIP has run through multiple phases (CIP1-CIP3), with the current CIP4 continuing work that includes pharmaceuticals and antimicrobial resistance among other emerging substances.

The outputs from CIP (including data around pharmaceuticals and AMR) are shared across the water industry, regulators (including the Environment Agency/DEFRA) and researchers to inform environmental risk assessments, technology evaluation, and future regulatory responses. This collaborative evidence base underpins discussions about potential treatment improvements, trends in chemical occurrence, and the impacts of wastewater discharges on receiving waters.

CIP4 is the next stage of this programme and builds on previous pharmaceuticals/AMR and continues sampling and analysis of trace substances. CIP4's final output will continue to expand understanding of pharmaceutics and AMR in wastewater and biosolids contexts, with data collection on-going over the AMP8 period.

Reports and outputs from the national UKWIR Chemical Investigation Programme – including work on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and pharmaceuticals – can be accessed on UKWIR website

https://ukwir.org/cip3-information. Volume 1; Volume 5; Volume 9; and Volume 12 being the most relevant to your enquiry.

We hope that this response answers your request. However, if you're not satisfied with how we've handled it, you can request an internal review. To do this, please write to us at Environmental Information Office, Haweswater House, Lingley Mere, Warrington, WA5 3LP or email us at EIRRequests@uuplc.co.uk, addressing your request to [redacted], and explaining why you're unhappy with our response. We'll be very happy to review your request and ensure we've done everything we can to assist you.

Any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of receipt of this response, and we will reply within 40 working days from receipt of the request for internal review.

Many thanks