

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

While I understand that our water currently meets the regulatory standards set by the Drinking Water Inspectorate, the evolving global scientific consensus regarding the persistence and bioaccumulation of PFAS raises important questions. Scientific bodies worldwide have highlighted concerns regarding chronic exposure to even minute concentrations, citing potential impacts on the immune and endocrine systems.

Given these health considerations, I would appreciate more granular information regarding United Utilities' current approach. Specifically:

1. **Testing Rigor and Frequency:** Could you please provide details on the current monitoring protocols for PFAS and other emerging chemical pollutants in the Greater Manchester area?
2. **Data Access:** I would be grateful if you could direct me to the specific reports or datasets that detail the results of these tests, beyond the general summaries currently available on your website.
3. **Future Strategy:** How is the company preparing to meet the potential tightening of international safety thresholds for these compounds?

Our response

I'd like to firstly reassure you that we do take water quality very seriously. We continuously monitor the quality of the water that is leaving our water treatment works. Every day, samples are collected from our water treatment works, service reservoirs and at customer properties to ensure that the drinking water is clean and safe to drink.

These samples are tested in our accredited laboratory using approved methods to ensure that the water quality meets the standards set out in the UK Regulations. These standards are known as Prescribed Concentrations or Values (PCVs for short). Where we identify that there has been, or could be, a change in water quality we investigate promptly, provide advice to customers, and undertake additional tests.

With specific reference to the parameters you are interested in, I can confirm that:

PFAS – all of our water sources are monitored for PFAS and in most cases, these substances are not present. I can confirm that we don't have any high-risk sites. We do not have any high-risk sources. Water companies are required to monitor PFAS monitoring in the raw water (untreated) and water treatment works (treated water), rather than consumers' taps.

Currently there are no statutory standards for PFAS in drinking water, nor is there a World Health Organisation guideline value. The DWI has taken a precautionary approach and produced tiered guideline values for water companies, which we adhere to.

The DWI's three-tier system reflects the level of PFAS detected and determines the actions required for detections at each level:

Tiers	Value	Risk Level
Tier 1	<0.01 µg/L	Low Risk
Tier 2	<0.1 µg/L	Medium Risk
Tier 3	>0.1 µg/L	High Risk

Should we receive any elevated PFAS results; we carry out investigations and increase monitoring. We keep the DWI and the relevant health authorities up to date on the results and there are options available to us for example, removing a source from supply, additional treatment using granular activated carbon, or carrying out controlled blending to minimise any concentration. We are also continuing to participate in the latest research to improve our understanding of treatment options for PFAS in drinking water.

The PFAS monitoring frequency is determined through a risk-based approach, in line with the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) PFAS guidance, Guidance on the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2016 (as amended) for England specific to PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) in drinking water.

The monitoring programme is reviewed regularly and updated as new risks emerge or additional PFAS substances are added to the analytical suite. I have enclosed a copy of the sampling frequencies for Greater Manchester sites in 2026 in Appendix 1. Please note that as the site names are deemed to form part of Critical National Infrastructure (CNI), I have instead provided you with a reference number for each site, rather than their names. This approach is in line with Regulation 12(5)(a) of the EIR. Sampling frequencies are determined from risk assessments and ongoing monitoring results:

- Low risk sites are sampled quarterly to establish baseline PFAS concentrations and support a robust risk assessment. Once sufficient data is available, monitoring continues at a frequency sufficient to periodically validate the risk assessment.
- Medium risk sites are sampled monthly to generate sufficient data for trend analysis and predictive modelling. Monitoring frequencies may be increased where results or modelling indicate a potential change in risk.
- High risk sites are sampled at a minimum monthly frequency. Sampling is scheduled to capture variations in hydrological conditions.



Water for the North West

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PFAS results are submitted to the Drinking Water Inspectorate alongside the monthly compliance data return in accordance with the Information Direction. PFAS data is publicly available and can be viewed on our [Environmental Information Disclosure Log](#) under reference EIR-578 and EIR-906. As above, the sites in Appendix 1 cover the whole of the Greater Manchester area. I can confirm that the final water supplied your tap is assessed as Tier 1 (low risk), and a copy of the last 12 months' worth of data for the water supplied to your home can be found in Appendix 2.

Microplastics – we do not currently monitor for microplastics in drinking water as we are not required to. Whilst this is the case, it's important to note that all of our water treatment works that treat water from rivers, springs and reservoirs have robust treatment processes in place that remove microplastics from the drinking water. Conventional drinking-water systems can remove particles smaller than a micrometre through processes of coagulation, flocculation, sedimentation/flotation, and filtration.

Water UK research shows that current water treatment processes remove 99.9% of microplastic particles from sources of drinking water. Raw water (untreated water in the environment) contained on average 4.9 microplastics per litre while potable water (water that has gone through a treatment process) contained only 0.00011 microplastics per litre. This was further confirmed by research published by the Drinking Water Inspectorate in 2022 [Publication of research on the Removal of Microplastics by Drinking Water Treatment Processes - Drinking Water Inspectorate \(\[dwi.gov.uk\]\(http://dwi.gov.uk\)\)](#). We continue to be involved in research in this area, as well as development of standardised methods for future microplastic analysis.

Pharmaceuticals – we do not routinely monitor for pharmaceuticals in drinking water. For awareness, most of our drinking water comes from upland impounding reservoirs that have very few wastewater inputs, therefore our sources would be considered low risk. We are actively involved in research to understand the concentrations of pharmaceuticals in the environment and should any risks be highlighted through this work, then further investigations, including monitoring will be undertaken. No standards currently exist for pharmaceuticals in drinking water; so, water companies are not required to routinely look for them.

Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals – we do not routinely monitor for endocrine disrupting chemicals in drinking water. As above, most of our drinking water comes from upland impounding reservoirs that have very few wastewater inputs, therefore our sources would be considered low risk.

Sampling is undertaken using a risk-based approach, with frequencies determined through site specific risk assessments and reviewed periodically to ensure they remain appropriate.

This is consistent with the requirements of Regulation 10 of the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations, which requires water suppliers to undertake appropriate sampling where there are reasonable grounds to believe that a substance may be present at concentrations that could affect wholesomeness, and to take a sufficient number of samples at an appropriate frequency to assess and quantify any risk.



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We continuously monitor the quality of the water leaving our water treatment works as well as taking samples for analysis for a range of parameters at our treatment works, storage reservoirs and at customer properties. A summary of water quality sample data is available on our website at <https://www.unitedutilities.com/help-and-support/your-water-supply/>. Should any of these sample results be above the standard a full investigation is undertaken.

We are aware that PFAS is likely to be subject to tighter regulation and are already developing analytical methods in our laboratory with lower limits of detection. We'll continue to keep abreast of the emerging information and trends across the UK Water industry and further afield. Should there be a change in a risk profile for a particular source, then we would present a case for additional treatment. OFWAT, the economic regulator for water industry in England have recognised the uncertainty around PFAS regulation, with mechanisms in place to secure additional funding for further investment if required. You can read more about this, here: [Sustainability Report 2025](#) and here [PFAS | United Utilities - Corporate](#).

I hope that this information is useful, however if you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to me again. 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



We'd love to hear your feedback on how we handled your request! If you have a moment, please complete our short survey [here](#) – your input helps us improve our service.