

Low water pressure on Dog Kennel Hill and Denmark Hill, South Camberwell

Residents of dwellings on the hill suffer years of intermittent water supply. Some residents have had no water in the morning for at least three years.

Councillors in South Camberwell have received many complaints from residents about the problems of low water pressure and often the total lack of water for large parts of the day including the weekends. In order to get a clearer picture of the extent of the problem Cllr. Veronica Ward and Cllr. Peter John have carried out a survey of residents on the three most affected blocks on each hill – a total of 267 dwellings. Before the closing date 45 forms have been returned cataloguing a continuous daily struggle coping without an adequate water supply.

Some residents have made many complaints both to both Thames Water and the Housing office and in the main been told that the other agency is to blame. While this buck passing goes on residents continue to suffer. Some residents are aware that the Housing Department is looking into the need to install pumps but see no progress and have become disheartened.

It is clear that Thames Water and Southwark Housing need to work together on this.

What did residents say in their responses us ?

1. How long has this been going on ?

Many had experienced the problem for about three years, often from the time they moved into the property. One person reported that she had suffered the problem for 10 years. Others have had the problem for a few months and none of the times mentioned were linked with specific blocks. So individual residents have a much worse service than others in the same block. Overall the feedback might indicate that the problem has been getting worse over the last 18 months.

2. How frequently ?

Residents are affected at different time, some during the week and some only at weekends. However consistent feedback is that residents are without water at peak times usually 7.00 – 10.00 in the morning and again early evening. **One resident said she only got water at these times on Bank Holidays and Christmas Day.**

“5 days a week morning and evening” “usually weekends” “every morning” “mid morning weekends” “8.00am – 2.00pm and sometimes at night..7.pm – 12.00” “Saturdays and Sundays every week”, “every day”, “twice a day”.

3. Hot Water, cold water or both ?

“Bathroom and toilet also hot water supply to kitchen almost every weekend” “mostly hot water and toilet”, The majority experience loss of cold water “You can never be sure when there will be water” “starts off with cold water, tank runs out then hot water also goes” “kitchen and bathroom: no hot water”

4. 17 residents have complained to Thames Water, some almost continuously. "said it was down to Southwark Council" "not their problem" "usually say not their responsibility" "they will call us back but they never did" Thames Water are reported as responding egs.: "temporary problem, working on solution" "There is no shortage" , " go to local housing office", "nothing to do with them", "broken pipes",
5. 25 residents have complained to the Neighbourhood Housing Office consistently about the situation. The responses have included "down to Thames Water", "water board's responsibility", "its being dealt with" "will cost £50,000 per block" "inform Thames Water", "burst pipes"

6. What else did residents say about having no water for hours almost every day. Daily life is miserable because of this situation.

"I have made lots of phone calls but noone knew what was going on and kept passing me backwards and forwards"

"As we pay water rates, this should be rectified"

"we need this situation resolved as soon as possible, we never know when we can use a washing machine, bath or toilet and all this in 21st century. Will the water board compensate us for this dreadful inconvenience ?"

"it is such a bad experience ...we have many little children in the house"

I have to fill baths of water overnight to flush the toilet"

"In my flat I have a combi boiler...it takes 25 minutes to run a bath. I have been paying for water but not receiving it. Noone seems to have taken this seriously"

"please please sort something out it does not feel like the western world anymore"

"_I have been flooded twice because of this, the neighbours have left taps on not realising that the water has gone off. My washing machine has been damaged as a result."

"Please resolve"

"I have bought tons of water which I would otherwise not have bought being on low income and raising three children alone."

"Having a very sick husband and trying to get my washing done in the machine and having no cold water running to rinse it pretty awful and very frustrating "

"Please please can we have water for Christmas !,... I have family staying and it would be nice to be able to shower , bath and flush the toilet"

"Just get it sorted"

Four respondents reported no problems with the water. But they were not consistently in one part of the block. One was on the top floor of a block badly affected and another was on a ground floor and one in the middle floor. Part of the problem of getting it solved may be the inconsistent service on these two estates.

Councillors Peter John and Veronica Ward 9th December 2003

