



guardians of drinking water quality

## DRINKING WATER INSPECTORATE

Area 7E, 9 Millbank  
c/o Nobel House  
17 Smith Square  
London SW1P 3JR

Direct Line: 030 0068 6424  
Enquiries: 030 0068 6400

E-mail: [jeni.colbourne@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:jeni.colbourne@defra.gsi.gov.uk)  
DWI Website: <http://www.dwi.gov.uk>

24 June 2014

**To: Alun Davies AM,  
Minister for Natural Resources and Food**

I am pleased to inform you that *Drinking water 2013* will be published on 10 July 2014. The report is the 24<sup>th</sup> published by the Inspectorate and it covers both private and public water supplies. During July, I will be talking about the report at various seminars around the country hosted by the Consumer Council for Water and attended by the water industry and local authorities.

*Drinking water 2013* provides a record of the work of my inspectors in checking that water companies and local authorities have taken the appropriate action to maintain, or where necessary, improve drinking water quality and safeguard public health. It also makes transparent where my inspectors were not satisfied and, therefore, made an intervention in the public interest. For your information, I have attached to this letter the summaries to each of the different parts of my report setting out the key facts and figures.

Overall, in 2013, the figure for public water supply compliance with the EU Drinking Water Directive for England and Wales, was 99.97%. For Wales the figure is 99.96%. This is very good news generally; however, it must be understood that the compliance figure is not a 'performance target'. The Directive lays down the minimum standards that must be achieved therefore action to address the 0.04% of failures is mandatory. Some of these actions were completed shortly after the time of the failure or the event; however, some require more substantive improvement works and these have been incorporated within statutory instruments that form part of water companies' business plans submitted to Ofwat as part of the price review. These improvements will, therefore, be funded and delivered during the Asset Management Plan period 2015 to 2020 (AMP6). It is noteworthy that the scale of this AMP6 drinking water investment program is smaller than the previous AMP5 programme.

The picture in relation to private water supplies is less satisfactory with 7% of tests failing to meet the drinking water standards; however, this represents a small improvement from the 9.6% of failures reported in 2010, when information about this type of water supply was first published. Local authorities were given five years to risk assess all private supplies, apart from those serving single domestic dwellings. Across England and Wales, as a whole, after four years, the number of private supplies that had been risk assessed was 5,573 (4,551 in England, 1,022 in Wales) covering approximately one-third (32%) of all relevant private supplies. This compares favourably to the situation published in *Drinking water 2012* where it was reported that only one-fifth (19%) of relevant private supplies had been risk assessed after three years. My report sets out in detail the performance of each local authority together with information about the support being provided to them by my inspectors. Looking specifically at the position in Wales, after four years, the Inspectorate can report that close to two fifths (42%) of required risk assessments are in place and this information has been provided to the Welsh Government to enable the administration of grants. This compares favourably to the figure published in *Drinking water 2012* when it was reported that only one one-quarter (27%) of relevant private supplies in Wales had been risk assessed.

Notwithstanding the good quality of drinking water generally, during 2013, the Inspectorate was involved in the investigation of two events where consumers were made ill as a consequence of contaminated drinking water: an infection of *E.coli* 0157 that was linked to a private supply at a rented property and a public supply, which was strongly associated with 19 cases of cryptosporidiosis. The learning points from these and the other events and case studies published in my report this year serve as a salutary reminder that safe drinking water requires constant vigilance and careful maintenance by competent persons.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeni Colbourne', written over a horizontal line.

Prof. Jeni Colbourne MBE  
Chief Inspector of Drinking Water