

 NORTH EAST WATER	<b>Business Unit:</b> <b>Customer Service</b>	<b>Document No:</b> PO/00000020 <b>Version No:</b> 1 <b>Issue Date:</b> 19 August 2008
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## HARDSHIP POLICY

### Definition of Hardship:

*A customer experiencing financial hardship is someone whose intention is to pay, but who does not have the financial capacity to make the required payments within the time frame set out in North East Water's payment terms.*

### Policy:

North East Water believes that there are two types of financial hardship - long term and temporary.

**Long term financial hardship** is generally defined as those with low or fixed incomes who may require ongoing assistance.

**Temporary financial hardship** is generally defined as those who have experienced a sudden change in living circumstances such as ill health, unemployment, a death in the family, a loss arising from an accident or some other temporary financial difficulty who may require payment flexibility.

North East Water understands that, depending on the type of hardship being experienced; customers will have different needs and will require different solutions.

The degree of hardship will be determined by either self-assessment, an internal assessment process or by an external body eg. An independent accredited Financial Counsellor.

North East Water has adopted an internal assessment process that: -

1. Determines a customer's eligibility using objective criteria as indicators of hardship;
2. Is designed to make an early Identification of a customer's hardship;
3. Determines the internal responsibilities for the management, development, communication and monitoring of the Policy

North East Water will offer a range of solutions to customers identified as experiencing financial hardship who are making every effort to resolve their account and communicate with the Corporation, at the same time ensuring that they are treated fairly, without judgement, with dignity and are protected from debt recovery actions.

Information on the Hardship solutions offered by North East Water is detailed in the Hardship Procedure.