

REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF DRINKING WATER	7th February 2017
TO: ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE	
FOR INFORMATION	

Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)	
Strategic Theme	Resilient, Healthy and Engaged communities
Outcome	To provide Information on the quality of Drinking Water in 2015 by NI Water
Lead Officer	Jacqueline Barr
Cost: (If applicable)	Not Applicable

Background

In December 2016, the 20th report on the quality of drinking water was published by the Drinking Water Inspectorate, acting in their regulatory role on behalf of (DAERA) Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in respect of both public and private water supplies.

The 2015 report indicates that comprehensive monitoring was undertaken by NI Water to assess public drinking water quality and compliance is based on the results of tests carried out throughout the water supply chain from water treatment works, service reservoirs and at consumer taps.

Overall public drinking water quality remains high with 99.8% compliance reported, high levels of compliance were achieved at consumer taps, but of the 34 mandatory parameters, 12 did not achieve full compliance. Those parameters were lead, iron, aluminium, odour, taste, turbidity, trihalomethanes (TRIMS), copper, nickel, manganese, the individual pesticide, MCPA and E.coli.

Following investigations by NI Water to identify the causes of contraventions, the necessary corrective action was taken to prevent recurrence where possible. In relation to elevated levels of lead, a significant amount of work is required to improve compliance and in this regard NI Water has a lead strategy to replace service pipes made from lead.

Although there were high levels of compliance in 2015, events that had the potential to affect water quality did occur and were reported to the Drinking Water Inspectorate and Environmental Health Departments. Of the 60 events reported, 1 was considered serious (this occurred in Co. Down). 31 were significant, 10 minor and 18 not significant. 24/31 reported as significant happened at treatment works where the treatment was ineffective or the works were malfunctioning.

In relation to private water supplies the number of households served with a private water supply is limited. However many more people are exposed to them through their use in both commercial and public activities. In Northern Ireland private water supplies are often used as an alternative to, or in conjunction with the public water supply for a range of activities such as holiday accommodation (hotels, bed and breakfast facilities) public buildings (hospital care homes and universities) food/drink processors and manufacturers.

The same drinking water quality standards apply for private water supplies as for the public supply. During 2015, 147 sites are monitored throughout the province. Officers from our service area lift samples from 20 premises throughout our Borough on behalf of the Inspectorate. Overall compliance is reported as 98.94% in 2015, a slight improvement from 2014. Full compliance was achieved in 97 out of 147 (66%) of our registered sites. Of the fifty sites which did not comply with the regulatory standards, thirty three use their private supply as their primary source of drinking water, eight supplies were used for washing equipment and surfaces in contact with food or drink. Six use the supply as an ingredient in food and drink and three are used solely for personal hygiene (showers and wash hand basins).

All private supplies contraventions are investigated and action taken dependent on the severity of the failure; this includes restriction of the use of supplies.

As part of managing the risk of contamination through the water supply chain, Council and N I Water undertake these risk assessments on behalf of the Inspectorate.

These assessments characterise the risks to the drinking water supply and detail the control measures required to mitigate these.

In 2015 a new European Directive, Euratom 2013/51 was introduced to protect public health with regard to radioactive substances (including radon) in water intended for human consumption. This new standard is set at 100/Bq/L.