

**From:** EIR Compliance

**To:**

**Subject:** 20251125 – EIR

**Date:** 25 November 2025 09:58:06

Reference Number: **EIR**

Dear

We refer to your request for information submitted to Yorkshire Water dated 29 October 2025, which is set out below.

*"I am extremely worried about the "Do Not Drink" notices issued recently by Yorkshire Water (10th October) and I would like information on:*

- 1. What the contaminants are. (Yorkshire Water mentions coliforms and physiochemical anomalies, but I would like to know what specific bacteria and toxins have been identified.)*
- 2. How and why has this serious breach in standards occurred and what action has been taken to prevent its recurrence.*

*Yorkshire Water have apologised for any "frustration" that this may have caused, but I can assure you that the degree of worry and concern this situation has aroused is far more serious than simple frustration and a fully explanation is necessary.*

*Yorkshire Water has managed the situation in the HG3 postcode area with the protection of customers' health as our highest priority. Where necessary, health protection advice was issued as a precautionary measure to prevent any potential impact on customers. Our actions and evidence have been reviewed in consultation with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), the competent public health authority."*

## **Contaminants identified**

To clarify, the initial public health notice issued on 10 October was a “Boil Water Advice” notice, not a “Do Not Drink” notice. This was introduced following intermittent detections of relatively low levels of coliform bacteria in the water supply.

Over 400 water samples were collected during the investigation, of which less than 5% tested positive for coliform bacteria using the industry standard testing method. The species of coliform bacteria identified included:

- *Citrobacter gillenii*
- *Raoultella terrigena*
- *Serratia Fonticola*

These organisms are not considered harmful to human health in drinking water in the concentrations at which they were detected, but their presence is unexpected and therefore warrants further investigation.

Additionally, two samples were found to contain *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) but at concentrations below the regulatory standard. Both detections were isolated, with no recurrence in follow-up sampling. The presence of *E. coli* is not in itself indicative of a health risk but is treated as a potential signal that a pathway may exist for other microorganisms to enter the system. The first detection prompted the issue of Boil Water Advice, and the second occurred while that advice remained in place.

As the incident progressed, chlorate, a chemical compound was also intermittently detected in the water supply. Although the vast majority of samples showed low levels of chlorate, the specific source could not be confirmed at the time. As a precautionary step, the health protection advice was upgraded to a “Do Not Drink” notice on 24 October for a limited sub-area within the affected region while further investigations took place.

### **Cause and remedial actions**

During investigation Yorkshire Water was able to rule out direct impact on the drinking water network via a breach of integrity, i.e. there was no evidence of a leak or other defect allowing contamination by bacteria. No water supplies are fully sterile. We have addressed the presence of bacteria by altering our network protection systems such that a slightly raised level of disinfectant is present. The level of chlorine now matches that across most of Yorkshire.

Subsequent investigation identified that chlorate levels returned to normal background concentrations following the installation of backflow protection devices at several third-party private water supply locations. These devices prevent water from private systems flowing back into Yorkshire Water's network.

The evidence suggests that intermittent backflow from private supplies may have contributed to the detections observed. Yorkshire Water has worked cooperatively with the third parties involved, and there is no evidence of any deliberate breach of the Water Fittings Regulations.

All water quality samples have since returned to normal levels, and monitoring is in place to ensure that standards remain fully compliant.

Summary:

- Detected contaminants: coliform bacteria (Citrobacter Gillenii, Raoultella Terrigena, Serratia Fonticola), low-level E. coli, and chlorate.
- Cause: identified presence of bacteria at low level and likely intermittent backflow from private water supplies.
- Actions taken: Issued precautionary Boil Water and Do Not Drink notices; installed backflow protection; worked with UKHSA and affected third parties; implemented enhanced monitoring.
- Current position: Water quality has returned to compliant levels, and measures have been taken to prevent recurrence.

In addition to this written response, we believe that you may benefit from speaking with a scientist to discuss this matter further. Your contact details have been forwarded to the relevant department and they will be in touch to arrange a time and date suitable to yourself to discuss the matter in further depth and address any concerns you may have following our EIR response.

We trust that the provision of this data satisfies your request. In accordance with the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, if you are not satisfied with this reply to your request you can ask for an internal review. A request for an internal review must be submitted within 40 working days by contacting the Data Protection Team.

Thank you for contacting Yorkshire Water.

Yours sincerely,

Data Protection Team

Email: [EIR@Yorkshirewater.co.uk](mailto:EIR@Yorkshirewater.co.uk)