

The team

Operations Catchment Services - Water Quality

The Environment Agency protects and improves water quality in our rivers, lakes and seas. In OCS we help make this happen. We provide a professional water quality service to our customers in environmental planning, water company account, nuclear new build and permitting teams.

We are structured in 5 nationally dispersed teams that focus on the key aspects of water quality planning:

Operations Catchment Services (Water Quality)				
Team name:	Marine	Wastewater Systems	Innovative Permitting	Freshwater (2 teams)
Main work areas:	Marine modelling, Nuclear new build, Bathing waters, Shellfish waters	Urban drainage and sewerage systems, Wastewater flows	A new approach to permitting called catchment based permitting	River and lake modelling, Nutrient management, Chemicals investigations

All teams support our Area-based teams in assessing water quality improvements put forward by the water industry during the 5 yearly Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP) and provide support on complex permitting and planning applications.

Team structures in OCS-WQ

Each team has a Grade 6 Team Leader, a Senior Specialist, Grade 5 Specialists and Grade 4 Officers, except the Innovative Permitting team which does not have any Grade 4 Officers. The department is also supported by a Grade 3 Business Support Officer.

Team work areas

Within each team we support each other in delivering advice on complex permitting and planning matters, so you never feel alone. The teams work flexibly and prioritise work to meet the needs of our customers and deliver our expert service; this means the work is varied and there are plenty of opportunities to develop your skills. At times we may need you to flex between the teams in order to support work priorities, provide resilience, and support your development within the department.

Freshwater

We deliver technical leadership and support for freshwater quality planning and modelling in rivers and lakes.

We work closely with other teams on topics including nutrients, water company plans including water recycling schemes, and aspects of discharge permitting. The team is accountable for maintaining and applying the Environment Agency's river water quality models.

We lead the cross-cutting Freshwater Modelling portfolio with assistance from members of all the other teams with training and development a particular focus.

Marine

A large amount of the team's work supports the government's Nuclear New Build ambitions, ensuring that development allows for environmental needs. Our team has audited the modelling of thermal and chemical impacts of cooling water discharges, and potential impacts of discharge from fish recovery and return systems.

We provide water quality modelling advice on other permitting and planning applications that could impact the marine environment including projects such as non-nuclear power plants, other industrial discharges and bulk water transfers and effluent re-use schemes.

We maintain the Environment Agency's Pollution Risk Forecasting tool which is used during the Bathing Water season to warn bathers of poor water quality.

We support area teams in reviewing modelling from water company investigations on the potential sources of pollution into our estuarine and coastal waters.

We support the River Basin Management Plans and through modelling the impacts of eutrophication in our estuarine and coastal waters.

Wastewater systems

The team provides technical support and advice to colleagues in relation to wastewater and drainage.

We work on planning issues relating to the sewerage network and work with colleagues on some aspects of wastewater system permitting. We facilitate the Environment Agency's water quality community to give a consistent approach to our wastewater systems work and identify and resolve issues. As a result we improve technical resilience.

We work with colleagues on developing our policy and guidance to provide suitable training and learning opportunities for our operational staff. Our main work areas relate to the Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP), planning where improvements could best be made, assessing delivery, and providing training.

Innovative permitting

The Innovative Permitting Team provides technical support and advice to area colleagues in relation to innovative permitting schemes for nutrients and innovative flexible chemical solutions.

We are currently working on: reviewing Option Assessment Reports (OARs), catchment modelling, developing the Operating Technique Agreement (OTA), and compliance assessments. We work with many teams across the organisation both in national and area teams.

If you are successful in being recruited to the department we will try and match the team that you join to your preference, previous experience and skills - subject to capacity and resource demands within the teams.

The role

The role fits into our Technical and Scientific Services job family at grade 5. As a Specialist you will have the responsibility of being a technical leader in Freshwater. You will provide timely answers to technical questions from colleagues, coordinate the response and retain an overview. You will lead on delivering the work, supported by technical officers, and have the opportunity to mentor them – growing the next generation of experts. You will build strong working relationships both with your immediate team and other teams in the Environment Agency and use your communication skills to explain technically challenging concepts to a variety of audiences.

Please contact graham.watt@environment-agency.gov.uk if you would like to discuss the role in more detail.

Employee testimonials



Ben Evans, Team leader (Marine team)

I regularly receive feedback on how much the team's technical expertise is valued by others across the business, giving confidence to decision makers. I am always impressed how team members not only take responsibility for their own development but also in passing on their expert knowledge to others.

The Environment Agency offers fantastic opportunities to get involved with staff networks and on top of my team leader role I also Chair our Sports and Social clubs as I recognise the important role that they have for employee health and wellbeing.



Paul Simmons, Water Quality Senior Specialist (Grade 6)

I have been working for the Environment Agency since its creation and have held roles in many different water quality teams. Working in the water quality team in Operational Catchment Services is unique because you work with a great group of recognised technical experts, you work with a variety of internal and external customers, and there are always opportunities to learn new skills and progress your personal development. The team provide a high quality service and play a key role in supporting others, particularly water companies, to deliver significant environmental outcomes.

Employee testimonials



Susie Rowlett, Freshwater Modelling Specialist (Grade 5)

I have worked in the Environment agency for over 15 years and been part of OCS since its creation. I previously worked in Area operational and Regional strategic planning teams, so I have a good understanding of how the Environment Agency works and how the pieces fit together to achieve our environmental goals.

As a Water Quality Planner within OCS, my main focus is providing evidence for the environmental improvement schemes included in the water company WINEP. I do this through building and maintaining our water quality models, advising on wastewater treatment works improvements, and helping assess the options for achieving them. Over the past four years I worked on the Chemicals Investigations Programme, looking at the presence of chemicals in watercourses, evaluating treatment options and calculating indicative permit limits.

As well as this technical work, I am water company planning lead for Anglian Water. I support the area teams, provide a company overview, and support the Account Manager in high level meetings – I bring detail and evidence where needed.



Carolina Ospina, Water Quality Officer (Grade 4)

No two days are the same. We work as a National team on different projects that involve lots of teamwork and data analysis to support the Area teams. New starters can easily get involved as they get assigned a mentor. Having previously worked as a researcher in Academia, here I have been able to use my problem-solving skills to help water companies comply with current and upcoming environmental regulations. Our team provides a healthy work life balance and there are also many training opportunities through the Learning Zone platform where you can challenge yourself to learn new topics.