

SPSO decision report

Case: 201104452, Scottish Water
Sector: scottish government and devolved administration
Subject: sewer flooding - internal
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C's home was flooded with sewage and his insurance company arranged for him to stay in a nearby hotel. That evening, his home was again flooded with sewage. He complained to us that Scottish Water delayed in responding effectively to the sewage flooding. Scottish Water's code of practice states that they will usually attend within four hours if internal sewage flooding is reported. We found that an officer had attended the flood within four hours. A clean-up squad attended on the following morning and Scottish Water's contractors attended on the next day to try to resolve the problem in the sewer. We did not, therefore, consider that Scottish Water delayed unreasonably in responding to the sewage flooding.

Mr C also complained that Scottish Water failed to routinely inspect the sewer as part of their maintenance programme. There is no requirement for Scottish Water to proactively monitor and inspect the whole of their sewage system and it is not within our power to recommend that they adopt such a policy.

Finally, Mr C complained that Scottish Water failed to deal with his claim for compensation appropriately. We upheld this complaint. We found that Scottish Water had referred Mr C's claim for compensation to their insurers. However, they failed to tell them that a half brick had been found in the sewage system. We considered that they should have done so in order that the insurers could reach a sound decision based on all of the relevant evidence.

Recommendations

We recommended that Scottish Water:

- issue a goodwill payment of £200 to Mr C to cover his insurance excess; and
- apologise to him for failing to initially inform their insurers that a half brick had been found in the sewage system when they referred his insurance claim to them.