

SPSO decision report

Case: 201104832, Scottish Water
Sector: water
Subject: sewer flooding - internal
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained on behalf of a neighbour (Ms A) that Scottish Water's actions in respect of flooding were unreasonable. He said that Scottish Water had accepted that there was water coming in under Ms A's property, but had said that there was no evidence this was caused by their sewerage network. Ms A lived beside a beach and Scottish Water said that the flooding could have been caused by seawater.

We noted that Scottish Water only have funding to deal with capacity issues (where their sewers overflow) that cause internal flooding to a property. If the cause of external flooding is a simple blockage that can be easily fixed, they will do so, but if it is a structural problem, this may be more difficult to deal with. Our investigation found that there had been external sewage flooding around Ms A's home. We took the view that if the flooding was considered to be external, and Ms A had agreed that it was, then Scottish Water's actions would have been reasonable. However, we found evidence indicating that there was enough water under the floor of Ms A's bedroom to cause damage to skirting boards and internal plasterwork. There was also a report of odour, and damp meter readings were very high. We, therefore, upheld this complaint, as we considered that Scottish Water should have looked further into the reports of internal flooding at Ms A's property. Had they then identified internal flooding, they should have taken further action.

Mr C also complained that Scottish Water's communication with him and Ms A had been unreasonable. We did not uphold this complaint, as we did not find any evidence of this.

Recommendations

We recommended that Scottish Water:

- issue a written apology to Ms A for the failure to carry out further investigation into the reports of internal flooding at her home; and
- carry out further investigations to try to identify if the internal flooding was caused by their sewerage system. They should assess both the cause of the flooding and the risk of this occurring again in the future.