

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201305136, Scottish Water  
**Sector:** water  
**Subject:** disputed cost to repair sewer / drain  
**Outcome:** resolved, action taken by body to remedy, no recommendations

### Summary

Miss C told us that Scottish Water did not provide clear information on their website about the responsibility when there is a problem with pipework serving a domestic property. When she experienced sewage coming up through the drain in her newly fitted shower, she checked the website and noted the advice given that 'blockage on private land is the responsibility of the owner'. Having checked with her neighbours, who did not have a problem, she assumed the blockage was only in her property, and paid private contractors to resolve this. When, however, she looked further into this she said that she established that Scottish Water's website was not fit for purpose as she should have reported the problem to them. She said that although she complained, the Scottish Water website continued to contain incorrect and/or misleading information in relation to 'Pipe Responsibility'. She was also unhappy with Scottish Water's handling of her complaint, and complained that they had only offered her partial reimbursement of her costs. She also told us that they had not confirmed assurances they had given to her that her concerns about a neighbour's drain had been looked into.

When we investigated the complaint, Scottish Water told us that, while they provided a wide range of information about pipe responsibility for waste water flooding, the information on their website about pipe responsibility might not have been as easy to locate as it could have been. A review had been carried out, and they planned to add a further weblink to ensure that information was accessible to all customers. With regard to the cost of fixing the problem, Scottish Water told us that they had acted correctly. They said that because they had not carried out the investigations they had not been able to determine the impact, cause or origin of the problem, and this was reflected in their offer to reimburse half the costs. However, as an offer of goodwill, and in recognition of the decision that the webpage should be reviewed, they said they would now cover the full costs of the work. Scottish Water accepted that they had not followed up the assurances they had given Miss C about a neighbour's drain, and confirmed that a site visit had since been undertaken, which confirmed that there were no issues needing attention. We agreed that these actions provided a resolution to Miss C's complaint.