

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201104127, Scottish Water  
**Sector:** scottish government and devolved administration  
**Subject:** complaints handling  
**Outcome:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Ms C owns a property that she rents to a tenant. In December 2010, the tenant complained of intermittent water supply and low water pressure. During an initial telephone conversation with the tenant, Scottish Water found that the water pressure had returned. However, the problem recurred in January 2011. Scottish Water attended the property and found that the water pressure met the minimum standard of one bar of pressure. As such, they took no further action. Ms C continued to raise concerns about the issue as her tenant continued to complain of loss of water and low pressure.

In March 2011, Scottish Water arranged for a pressure flow test to be carried out, to assess the water pressure over a 24 hour period. Further investigations and complaints from other residents in the street led to the conclusion that there was a burst on the water main. In July 2011 a temporary solution was found pending refurbishment of the water main. Ms C complained that Scottish Water delayed in dealing with the problem, resulting in her losing rental income and other expenses. She also said that their communication was poor throughout her dealings with them.

Our investigation found that locating the source of the problem was not straightforward. However, Scottish Water did not respond to Ms C's reports of low water pressure in line with their general service standards, and a number of short delays contributed to a significant overall delay. We accepted independent advice from our adviser on water matters that water pressure can vary throughout the day depending on demand, and as such, a reading of one bar of pressure may be lower at peak times. It took ten weeks for Scottish Water to order the pressure flow test, despite numerous contacts from Ms C explaining that the low pressure problem persisted. We considered this should have been done sooner. We were also critical of Scottish Water's communication, which was often delayed and contained little useful information about what was being done to resolve the problem.

### Recommendations

We recommended that Scottish Water:

- apologise to Ms C for the issues highlighted in our investigation;
- make a payment to Ms C of £120 in line with their general service standards;
- consider making a further payment to Ms C in recognition of the time and trouble and expense incurred as a result of the low water pressure problem; and
- take steps to ensure their staff work in line with their customer service standards - Pressure Reference Map, which sets out the process that should be followed to achieve the 5 day service standard.