

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201100515, Knowes Housing Association Ltd  
**Sector:** housing associations  
**Subject:** repairs and maintenance of housing stock (incl dampness and infestations)  
**Outcome:** not upheld, action taken by body to remedy, no recommendations

### Summary

Mr C complained that the association did not help in any way after his cold water mains froze in January 2010. Mr C said his pipe froze again in December 2010 and the association only then identified that sections of it had not been laid at the minimum regulatory depth required.

We established that in January 2010 the association had sent a plumber to Mr C's home address, who had taken action to help thaw the pipe. He also advised Mr C on how to prevent the pipe freezing by keeping the heating on and keeping cupboard doors open at the mains inlet. At the insistence of Mr C, who was concerned that the pipe would freeze again the following winter, the association also inspected a section of the pipe in August 2010. It was found to exceed the minimum depth required.

The association took no further action until the pipe froze again in December 2010, this time affecting many residents. The association carried out further inspections of the pipe work when this happened, and discovered that not all sections met the required depth. Remedial action was taken to lay the pipe at the correct depth but some sections had to be lagged instead due to rock in the ground (which could not be broken up with heavy machinery for health and safety reasons).

Taking all of this into account, we considered the actions that the association took in respect of Mr C's complaints to be reasonable, given the unprecedented weather conditions and the fact that the problem in January had not been as widespread throughout the nearby properties as was the case in December.