

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201508074, The City of Edinburgh Council  
**Sector:** local government  
**Subject:** repairs and maintenance  
**Outcome:** not upheld, no recommendations

### Summary

Following a call from Mr C, the council sent a plumber to unblock a drain at his home. Mr C's own plumber had advised that the blockage was in the communal area of pipework and so when the council's plumber unblocked the drain, all residents in the block were invoiced. Mr C paid his share of this invoice. However, the council were then informed by another resident that he had not been affected by the blockage. As a result they contacted their plumber who confirmed that the blockage was in Mr C's pipework and not in a communal area. As a result they withdrew the invoices from other residents and invoiced Mr C for the full costs. They also apologised for not doing so earlier. Mr C complained that he was never told that he would be liable for the costs should the works not be communal and also that he was not told that he would be charged costs at the out-of-hours rate.

The council explained that it was their standard procedure to highlight costs and responsibilities to customers requesting that they attend to emergency repairs. They explained that information about their services and the costs are also available on their website.

The evidence suggested that Mr C's plumber had said that the block was likely to be in the communal pipework, so Mr C should call in the evening and request that a plumber attend. We obtained copies of the council's procedures and phone scripts. Although we were unable to say what was said in the phone calls, we were satisfied that the council had responded appropriately to Mr C's request for a service and were justified in invoicing Mr C alone, given that the council's plumber located the blockage in the pipework in Mr C's property. As the evidence suggested that the council dealt with the call out appropriately, and as we were unable to obtain sufficient evidence to establish that the council did not inform Mr C of costs and the process during his phone calls to them, we did not uphold his complaint.