

# Leaflet 4: Sewers and wastewater

This leaflet is for customers who receive sewerage services from us, our current list of sites can be found in the **My Location** section of our website, [albionwater.co.uk](http://albionwater.co.uk).

We maintain a system of sewers which takes the wastewater from your property to the public sewer system for treatment and disposal. The system of pipes which carries the wastewater is called the sewerage system. Surface and highway drainage may or may not be connected to our system.

We must provide and maintain an adequate sewerage system for our sewerage areas.

The sewerage system in your area is likely to be of one of two types, either:

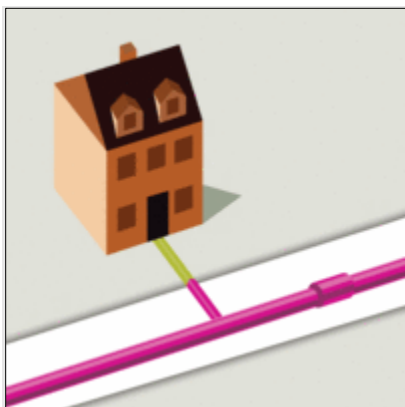
- a dual system in which storm and surface water drains to one sewer pipe and foul water from your property drains to a separate pipe; or
- a combined system where storm, surface water and foul water from your property drain to the same sewer pipe.

## Responsibility for Pipework

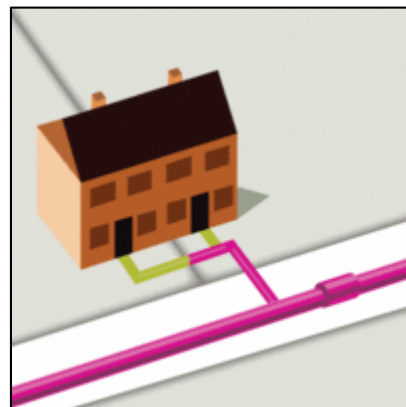
The pipework which comprises the sewerage system in our area of operation can be categorised in three ways:

- a private drain
- a private sewer
- a public sewer

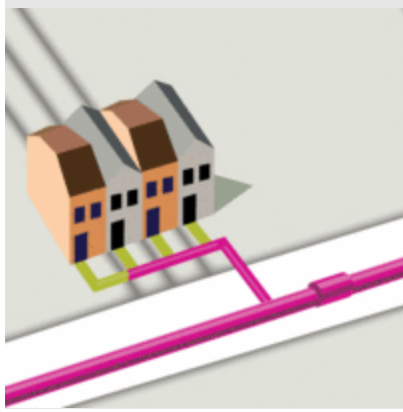
A private drain is a pipe which conveys foul or storm water from one property to a sewer or to the boundary of the property, whichever is the shorter distance.



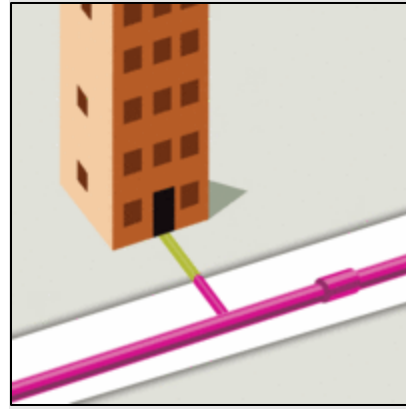
Detached



Semi-detached



Terraced



Flat or multiple dwelling

- Public sewer/drain— responsibility of sewerage company
- Privately owned— responsibility of property owner
- Property boundary

A private sewer is a pipe which collects and conveys foul or storm water from several units in a multi-occupancy property (including communal grounds). A private sewer may connect to a public sewer or a private sewage treatment works. Responsibility for a private sewer lies jointly with the owners of the properties which it serves.

A public sewer is one which has been vested in the Company and is shown as such on a statutory sewer map (many private sewers were adopted by water undertakers in October 2011 and may not yet be included in statutory maps). We are responsible for public sewers.

In most cases our sewers are situated in roads or public open places. Occasionally, however, our sewers may run through private land and gardens, in which case we have a right of access for maintenance and legal protection against you building over, or near, our sewer. Where we need to lay or maintain pipes in your land we will observe clear rules for working in private land. A copy of these rules ([Code of Practice for Pipe-Laying](#)) is available on our website in the [Document Library](#). Ofwat has a duty to investigate complaints about our exercise of works powers on private land, unless it considers that the we have not had sufficient opportunity to do so

## Sewer flooding

Sewer flooding is unacceptable; we aim to provide adequate capacity in our sewers to protect homes from flooding. However, extreme weather will always create some flooding risk as it is not always financially feasible or environmentally sustainable to provide sewers of sufficient capacity to cope with any amount of rain. Flooding from sewers can also occur for other reasons, such as blockages.

If there is a sewer blockage or a pumping station breakdown which threatens to flood domestic premises, we aim to have a representative on site as quickly as possible and to start work within 8 hours. If you identify a problem with the sewerage system, please call our Emergency Helpline on **0800 917 5819**. If Albion Water becomes aware of a flood risk it will attempt to contact occupiers who are likely to be affected.

If you are affected by sewer flooding call our Emergency Helpline. We will help with any clearing up necessary as a result of sewer flooding. We aim to complete a clear up within 12 hours for internal flooding and 24 hours for external flooding. The clear up can include pumping out, hosing down, litter picking, and cleaning floors and contaminated areas with disinfectant. If any damage has been caused, you will need to contact your insurance company. We are not liable for any damage caused by sewer flooding unless we have been negligent.

If you are not insured or your insurers decline to help, please contact our customer service team. We can arrange for a specialist contractor to assist.

If your home is flooded, you are entitled to a payment equal to your annual sewerage charges under our Guaranteed Standards Scheme, see full details in the [My Account section of our website](#) or our leaflet 'LEAFLET 8 – GSS'. You may also be entitled to payment equal to 50% of your annual sewerage charge if you suffer external sewer flooding. Any dispute as to liability can be referred to Ofwat whose decision is final.

## **Statutory sewer maps**

It is our duty to produce a map showing the location of every public sewer or disposal main which is vested in us or which is likely to become vested. You have the right to inspect these maps. Please call our customer services team on **03300 242020** to arrange to view our maps.

If you would like us to provide you with information from the map rather than inspect it yourself, there may be a charge for this service (details of this can be found in your Charges Scheme).

## **Connecting to a public sewer**

You are entitled to have your drain or private sewer connected to our public sewers, subject to certain practical requirements. You will have to pay our expenses involved in making the connection.

You will need to supply us with details of the drain or private sewer to be connected and how the connection will be made, see the **Working with us** section of our website for how to apply for a connection. We will let you know within 21 days whether we can accept your proposals and what the costs will be. We can refuse permission if we consider that the mode of connection or the condition of the connecting pipe would damage our sewers. If you disagree with our decision the matter may be referred to Ofwat for determination.

You will have to pay:

- a charge for our inspecting the work or undertaking it ourselves.
- a contribution to our costs of providing the overall sewerage system. Further information on this charge - the sewerage infrastructure charge - appears in your Charge Scheme.

Once you have paid the inspection charges you must give us 14 days' notice of the day you, or your builder, propose to do the work so that we can inspect it to ensure that it meets our standards.

If we opt to make the connection to the sewer ourselves, any dispute about the costs we charge for making the connection may be referred to Ofwat for determination.

## **Requisitioning and Provision of Public Sewers**

If you live in an area which is not served by a public sewer, we are not obliged to provide one at our expense. However, if you and your neighbours - or your local authority - asks for a sewer to be provided we will provide one, but you and the other applicants - or your local authority - will have to pay any difference between the income we receive from charges for the disposal of waste water to the sewer and our reasonable costs in providing the sewer in each of the following 12 years.

Alternatively, you can ask to pay for mains using the discounted aggregate deficit method, which is a single statutory commuted sum. The Water Industry Act 1991 states that this is an amount equal to the sum of the estimated relevant deficits for each of the 12 years following the provision of the main, in each case discounted to a net present value.

We will also want some security from you before doing the work. We must provide the sewer within 6 months of the agreement between us. Unless you agree to an extension of time, if we break this deadline and you sustain loss or damage as a result, you may have a legal claim against us.

Any dispute in respect of the amount we require you to pay; or the undertakings or securities we expect you to give; or any extension to the period of six months within which we must provide a public sewer; or the places at which private sewers or drains join the public sewer may be referred to Ofwat.

Under Section 101a of the Water Industry Act 1991 new public sewers can be requested to serve existing properties currently connected to private wastewater disposal facilities. This can only happen where the following criteria are met:

- the properties must be domestic and built before 20 June 1995; and
- two or more properties must be experiencing amenity or environmental problems, e.g. odour, flooding of land or property, pollution of watercourses; and
- the problems must not be caused by inadequate maintenance of the existing private disposal system.

If a new sewer is provided, an individual householder would be responsible for payment of a sewerage infrastructure charge and sewer connection charge; installing and paying for a drain to connect her or his home to the new sewer; making safe any private disposal system no longer required; and paying sewerage charges to us once a connection has been made.