

## The Role of the Local Authority

If the property owners cannot resolve the problem amongst themselves the Environmental Health Department will determine the extent of the problem, the number of properties involved and the action required to resolve the problem. This usually results in either informal or formal action being taken.

### Informal Action

Environmental Health will endeavour to inform users of the appropriate action to take. e.g.

- Use rods to clear pipes personally or with the help of a neighbour
- Contact a local specialist drain company

### Formal Action - obstructed sewer

- A Notice served under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 will require all responsible persons to remove obstructions from a blocked private sewer within 48 hours. The Notice or covering letter will indicate all responsible persons involved.

- If the Notice is not complied with, the work will be carried out by the Council in default. The cost of the works, plus any administrative fees, will be apportioned equally on a pro rata basis and each responsible person will be invoiced accordingly.

### Formal Action - defective sewer

- A Notice served under the Building Act 1984, Section 59 will require all responsible persons to repair damaged parts of a private sewer.
- The Notice or covering letter will indicate all other persons involved. If the Notice is not complied with, the work will be carried out by the Council and the costs recovered as above.

## Public sewers

Problems relating to public sewers must be dealt with by Anglian Water. Their 24 hour emergency contact number is: 0845 7145 145

Environmental Health, Corby Borough Council,  
New Post Office Square, Deene House, Corby,  
Northants., NN17 1GD.

Tel: 01536 464000 Fax: 01536 464644

Web: [www.corby.gov.uk](http://www.corby.gov.uk)



## Private Sewers and Drains



Corby Borough Council

Environmental Health

## Public or Private?

The pipe that exits your house is called a drain. If this drain then joins a drain from another property, the pipe becomes a sewer from that point onwards.

Responsibilities for unblocking or repairing problem sections of foul sewage systems depend upon whether or not the sewer is classed as 'PUBLIC' or 'PRIVATE' - however this is not always easy to determine.

Public sewers are those that have been adopted by the sewerage undertaker (e.g. Anglian Water, their management contractors or predecessors) and, once adopted, cleaning and maintenance of that sewer is their responsibility. Plans of all such sewers are held by the sewerage undertaker, and may be available for viewing at the Council Offices.

Sewers built before 1 October 1937 are known as 'Section 24 sewers' and are the exception to the rule. They fit the general description of private sewers but they are actually public and therefore managed by the local sewerage undertaker.

A private sewer is a sewer that has not been adopted by a sewerage undertaker, and therefore it is the responsibility of the persons who use the sewer to clear blockages or repair damage.

- The fact that a sewer is located under a public road does NOT mean that it is a public sewer.
- Some public sewers can be found within the grounds (curtillage) of a private dwelling.

Diagram 1

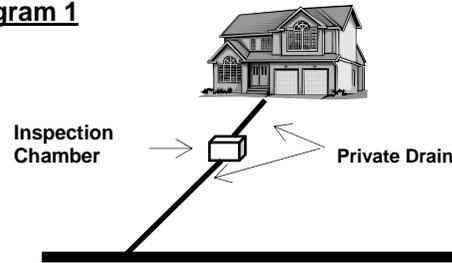
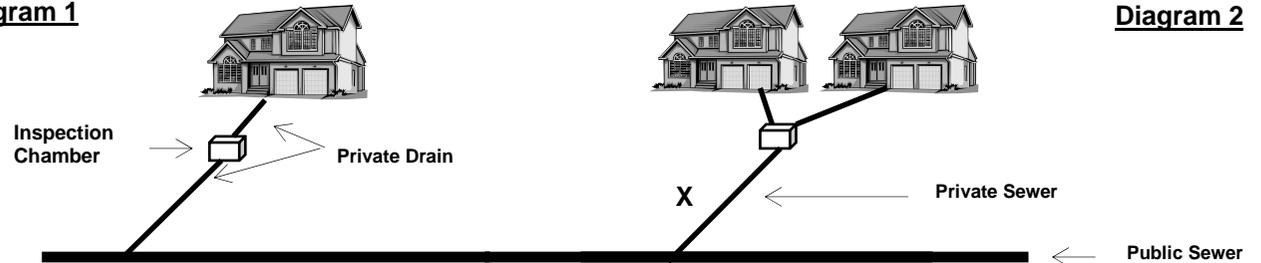


Diagram 2



Your household drain may flow straight into a public sewer (diagram 1). If a blockage occurs anywhere in this private drain, you have sole responsibility for cleaning any blockages or carrying out any repairs. Most properties have some length of private drain.

Drains from two properties may join together and form a private sewer, and then run some distance before connecting with the public sewer (diagram 2). If a blockage or defect occurs at point X in the private sewer system (diagram 2), the owners of the two properties would be responsible for rectifying the problem.

- Note that the boundary of the property does not indicate the end of your responsibility.

Diagram 3 below shows how all the drains from a block of houses link up before running into a public sewer. In some cases, the drains from an entire estate may join a private sewer system before linking up with the public system, and this could be some considerable distance.

Present legislation dictates that the owners or occupiers of premises above the point of the blockage or defect (i.e. whichever property's effluent flows through that point) are responsible. Therefore a blockage at point Y would only involve properties 4, 5 and 6. A blockage at point Z would involve all 6 properties.

Diagram 3

