

# WATRS

## Water Redress Scheme

### ADJUDICATOR'S FINAL DECISION SUMMARY

Adjudication Reference: WAT/X012

Date of Final Decision: 26 July 2022

#### Party Details

Customer:

Company:

#### Complaint

The customer says the company has refused to set up a new supply to his property to improve his water flow rate at its own cost, despite doing so for his neighbour. He seeks that the company provide a new supply pipe and fit a boundary box at his boundary at its own cost.

#### Response

The company says it is under no obligation to provide a new supply pipe for the customer. However, it has offered to contribute towards the cost of the works. It denies the claim.

#### Findings

The evidence shows the company provided its services to the standard to be reasonably expected.

#### Outcome

The company does not need to take any further action.

The customer must reply by 23 August 2022 to accept or reject this decision.

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## ADJUDICATOR'S FINAL DECISION

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### Case Outline

#### **The customer's complaint is that:**

- His property suffers from low water pressure due to the age and length of his private supply pipe.
- He would like the company to replace this free of charge. However, the company has only offered to contribute towards the costs and its plan for works is not his preferred solution.
- The company completed works for his neighbour free of charge, albeit 30 years ago.
- He seeks that the company provide a new supply pipe and fit a boundary box at his boundary at its own cost.
- In comments on the company's response, the customer says the company has not labelled plans correctly causing confusion when he has tried to get quotes from contractors. His contractors have also said the company's plan for works are not workable. The company has suggested it can complete the works and then take ownership of the pipes, but he cannot find guidelines to support this. His complaint is about low flow rate, not low water pressure.
- In comments on a preliminary decision the customer says the flow rate was 6 litres per minute at the external stop tap and so the company is not meeting requirements. Further, that he cannot carry out the work himself due to access issues and he cannot afford to pay the company to carry out the work due to the excessive cost quoted.

#### **The company's response is that:**

- The customer complained of low water pressure.

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- It investigated and found that the pressure was at 4 bars, but the flow dropped from 15 litres per minute to 6 litres per minute between the internal and external stops taps. This indicated a problem with the private supply pipe.
- It advised the customer that having a new connection would resolve this issue.
- Although under no obligation, in order to help with the cost of the new connection it offered to provide a section of the new pipe at its own cost. It then provided the customer with two options for the rest of the work and estimated quotes.
- The customer was not happy and felt it should complete the full job free of charge. He said it did so 30 years ago for the previous occupier of the neighbouring property, but did not provide any evidence of this.
- It denies the claim.

### How is a WATRS decision reached?

In reaching my decision, I have considered two key issues. These are:

1. Whether the company failed to provide its services to the customer to the standard to be reasonably expected by the average person.
2. Whether or not the customer has suffered any financial loss or other disadvantage as a result of a failing by the company.

In order for the customer's claim against the company to succeed, the evidence available to the adjudicator must show on a balance of probabilities that the company has failed to provide its services to the standard one would reasonably expect and that as a result of this failure the customer has suffered some loss or detriment. If no such failure or loss is shown, the company will not be liable.

I have carefully considered all of the evidence provided. If I have not referred to a particular document or matter specifically, this does not mean that I have not considered it in reaching my decision.

### How was this decision reached?

1. Water pressure is the force that pushes water through pipes. It determines the flow of water from the tap. If pressure is not sufficient then the flow can reduce to a trickle.

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2. Ofwat sets standards for water companies including on water pressure. It requires ten metres head of pressure or 1 bar, at the external stop tap, at a flow of nine litres per minute.
3. The company found the flow rate and pressure at the customer's external stop tap exceeded these standards, but rates dropped along the customer's private supply pipe. I note the customer did not previously dispute the company's findings in this regard, this was not raised in his application to WATRS and there is no evidence to show the company did not meet Ofwat's standards.
4. The company is not responsible for any issues with the customer's private supply pipe; it has no obligations in this regard.
5. As the issue is shown by the evidence to be with the customer's private supply pipe, I find that the company is not responsible for the low flow rate experienced by the customer. I therefore cannot say the company failed to provide its water supply services to the standard to be reasonably expected.
6. The customer wants the company to create a new connection for him at its own cost, to improve the flow rate to his property. However, there is no evidence that suggests the company is required to do this and I am not aware of any law or policy that suggests the company must. Even if the company did carry out works in the past free of charge, it does not follow that it is under any obligation to do the same now.
7. Therefore, while I acknowledge the company has refused to carry out the works at its own cost, the evidence does not show it has failed to provide its services to the standard to be reasonably expected in taking this position.
8. In accordance with the WATRS scheme rule 5.4.3 I must disregard any new matters raised the customer's comments on the company's response. Therefore I have not commented on such. It follows that I cannot consider new matters raised in the customer's comments on a preliminary decision, including his assertion that the company did not meet Ofwat's standards on flow rate.
9. I acknowledge the customer is in a difficult position; it is not easy for him to carry out the works to his supply pipe himself and he is unable to afford to pay the company to complete the works.

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However, this does not change my findings. It remains that the company is not obliged to carry out the works at a lower cost or free of charge.

#### **Outcome**

The company does not need to take any further action.

#### **What happens next?**

- This adjudication decision is final and cannot be appealed or amended.
- The customer must reply by 23 August 2022 to accept or reject this decision.
- When you tell WATRS that you accept or reject the decision, the company will be notified of this.

The case will then be closed.

- If you do not tell WATRS that you accept or reject the decision, this will be taken to be a rejection of the decision.



J Mensa-Bonsu LLB (Hons) PgDL (BVC)  
**Adjudicator**

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