

# New Homes Ombudsman Case Study: **Visible Waste Pipes**



## **Issue**

The customer complained that the bathroom sink's waste pipes were visible behind the pedestal and not concealed as described in the developer's quality guide. The developer initially agreed to reposition the pipes, but the proposed remedial work could not be completed due to the location of the floorboard joists.

## **Relevant sections of the New Homes Quality Code**

Part 3  
**After-sales, complaints and the NHOS**

## **Circumstances**

- The customer complained that the waste pipes installed behind the bathroom sink were unsightly. The installation featured a 90-degree pipe with large collars, and the pipes were not concealed as specified within the developer's quality guidelines.
- The customer contacted the developer requesting that the bathroom waste pipes be moved, and the developer agreed. However, the plumber could not carry out this work due to the layout of the joists beneath the bathroom floorboards.
- The customer also complained to their warranty provider, who said they were unable to resolve the matter because there was no technical defect.
- The developer says they cannot compensate the customer, as the issue was within the warranty provider's tolerance. As a gesture of goodwill, they offered to explore an alternative that the customer deemed appropriate, but the customer declined this offer.

## **Ombudsman's decision**

The Ombudsman reviewed the evidence and found that the developer had made its quality guide accessible to customers via its website. The guide outlined the expected standards before, during, and after construction, and stated that bathroom pipework should be concealed.

Although the bathroom sinks pipework met the required technical standards, the developer did not follow its own quality standards, so the pipework was left exposed.

The developer acknowledged that their agreement to carry out this work without first completing an inspection of the bathroom and identifying potential obstructions was a mistake. The developer apologised to the customer for not completing the proposed remedial work.

While the developer intended to fulfil the customer's request, it was reasonable not to proceed after the plumber inspected the bathroom and determined it was impractical.

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## Outcome

Complaint **partially upheld**. Customer awarded £150 in recognition of the inconvenience caused.



## Learnings

- It is important to thoroughly understand quality standards and guidelines to guarantee that customers receive the product they have paid for.
- Acknowledging when a customer has a legitimate complaint and offering a sincere apology and a path to resolution helps establish good customer service.

## Recommendations for developers

The standards, service, and finishing promised in sales materials should be fully deliverable and consistently met.

Consider the customer's frustrations with being presented with an incorrect product and show understanding with an apology over a phone call or in person.

