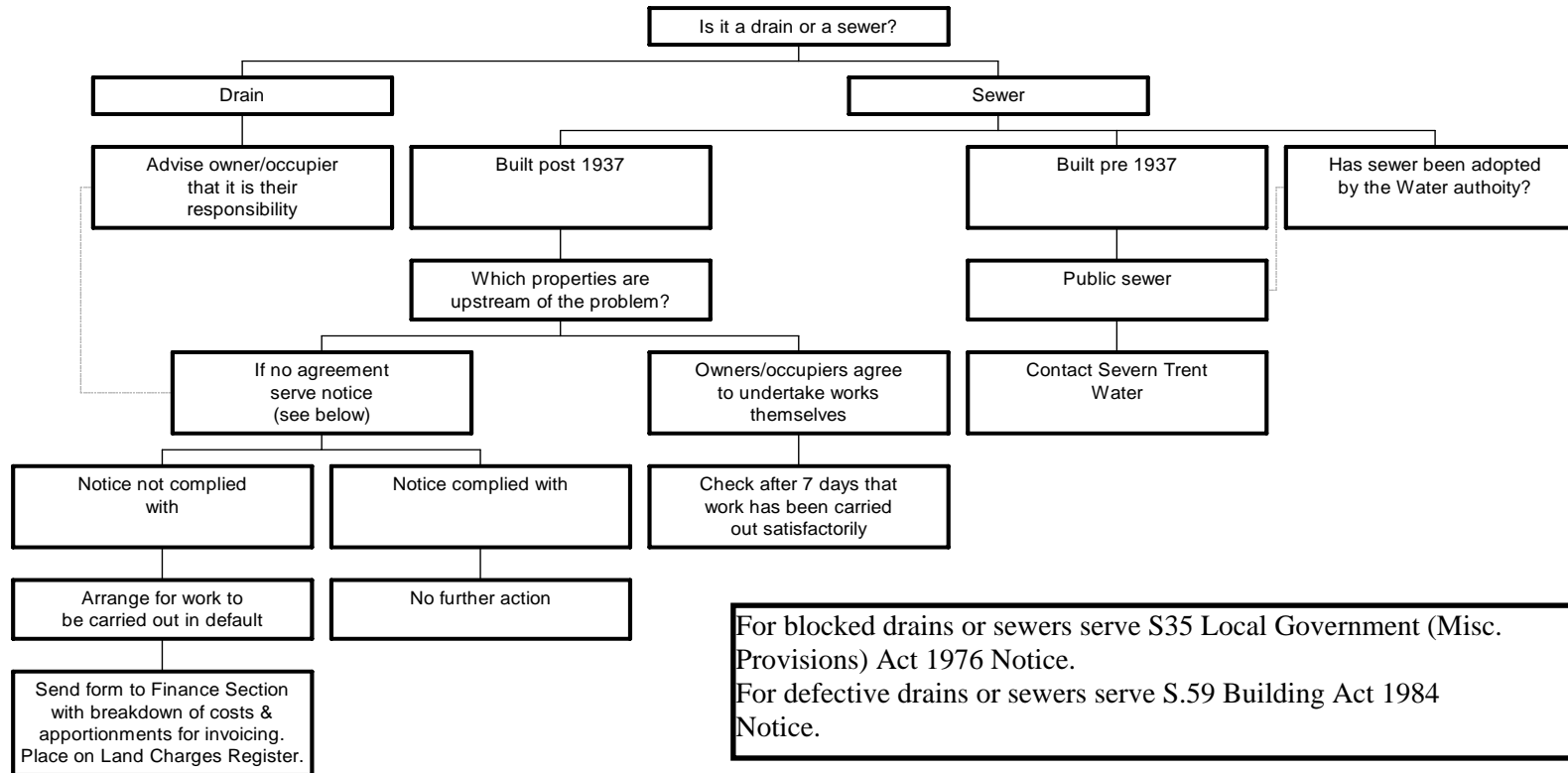
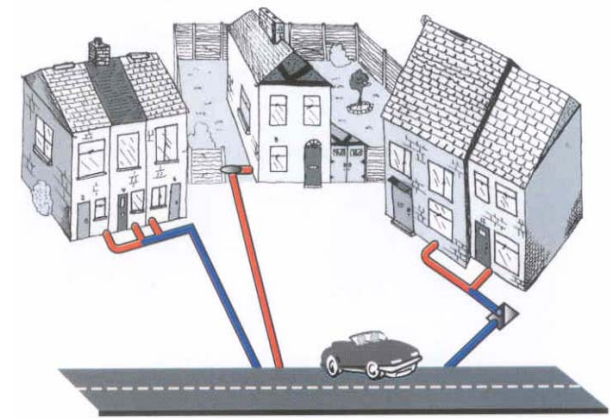


Actioning blocked/defective drains or sewers



For blocked drains or sewers serve S35 Local Government (Misc. Provisions) Act 1976 Notice.
 For defective drains or sewers serve S.59 Building Act 1984 Notice.

Below we explain who owns underground drainage pipes and what to do if they become blocked or damaged



Types of Pipe

Underground drainage pipes take water, including waste water and rainwater, away from buildings and land.

The picture shows a typical layout of pipes.

There are two types: **DRAINS - shown in red** and **SEWERS shown in blue**.

Every property has underground pipes connected to it. These are called **DRAINS** and are usually made of clay or plastic and take sewage or rainwater from just one property. No other properties are connected to the drain. But it is common for the drains of several properties to join together into a shared pipe. This is called a **SEWER**.

Who owns drainage pipes?

Some pipes belong to owners or occupiers of buildings or land. Others are owned by water companies such as Severn Trent Water. You can determine ownership from the age of the properties that are connected to the pipes and whether the pipes are drains or sewers.

Who owns a drain?

Drains legally belong to the owner or occupier of the property they are connected to even if they go under someone else's land or road. The owner or occupier is responsible for maintaining or unblocking them when there are problems.



Who owns a sewer?

Sewer pipes will often run along the front or back of several properties or towards the road. The age of the properties connected to them is important because it determines who owns the sewer.

With properties built **before** October 1937, the shared sewer pipe is called a **public sewer**. These are owned by the water company which supplies your area with water and they are legally responsible for maintaining them.

For properties built **after** October 1937 the shared sewer pipe is called a **private sewer**. These belong jointly to all the people who own the properties that connect to them. But the law says that if they are blocked or broken, it is only the owners "up stream" of the blockage or break who are responsible for solving the problem. This might sound unfair but your local Environmental Health Officer can provide advice on action to take.

What if the drain or sewer becomes blocked?

First, try and find out if anyone else is affected. Have a word with your neighbours. Blockages will often cause waste water to overflow from manhole covers or drainage gulleys outside, or cause toilets and sinks to empty too slowly.

Clearing a blocked drain

If you're sure that it's only your house that's affected, you'll probably need to contact a drain clearing specialist. They usually try to clear the blockage first by using a high pressure water jet. If you're not sure if it's only your drain that's blocked or if you need advice on choosing a specialist contractor contact your **Local Environmental Health Office**.

Clearing a blocked sewer

If you're sure that several properties are affected, it's likely that the problem is in the sewer (the 'shared' drainage pipe).

If the sewer takes waste water away from properties built before October 1937, it's a public sewer. So you should contact your water company. They are responsible for sorting the problem out. If your water company is Severn Trent Water they can be contacted via their website at <http://www.severntrent.co.uk>

If the sewer takes waste water away from properties built after 1937, it's a private sewer. You and the other owners affected are jointly responsible, contact your **Local Environmental Health Office** for advice.

How can we help?

We can give you detailed advice and tell you about specialist contractors. Although 'private sewers' are owned privately we are currently offering a free sewer clearing service using high pressure water jets. If we can't clear by jetting, or we find the sewer is broken then the owners will have to employ a contractor. If they can't do this we can serve a notice on all of them and carry the work out on their behalf. If we do this then we charge each one a share of the costs.

Choosing a specialist contractor

Your **Local Environmental Health Office** can give advice, and you can find contractors in Yellow Pages, Thompsons or other trade directories under "drainage and pipe cleaning". Ask before they visit if there is a call out charge, and what that charge is likely to be. Many blockages can be cleared by rodding or high pressure jetting. This will usually cost about £50.00. If the contractors can't clear the blockage, and say they need to dig up the pipe, make sure they tell you exactly what they are going to do and how much it will cost BEFORE they start the work.

Will my building insurance cover any costs?

Drain or sewer problems may be covered for insurance purposes, but check with your building insurance company before you call a contractor.