

SPSO decision report

Case: 201200094, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: charging method / calculation
Outcome: not upheld, action taken by body to remedy, no recommendations

Summary

After Mr C had a meter fitted at his property, he noticed a significant increase in his water bills. When he queried this with Business Stream he was told that it would be due to a leak that was his responsibility to resolve. He employed a plumber to re-route some pipes, but this led to Mr C's neighbour being disconnected, as the water supply was shared. Mr C called out the plumber again to resolve the neighbour's supply problem, then again to fix a leak in his property that had resulted from the work on the pipes.

Mr C wanted a refund for the cost of this work, as he said it was due to a shared supply that he had not been made aware of. He sent invoices to Business Stream, who questioned the validity of the information on them, but sent Mr C a cheque for half the cost of the plumber's original work. However, they were unwilling to give any more as they said that work on internal pipes was not their responsibility, and they would not normally contribute to the cost of such works. We took independent advice from one of our water advisers, who clarified that Business Stream are not responsible for fixing leaks in a property. They may contribute to costs for splitting a shared supply, but only when meters are fitted at their request. On this basis, we considered the amount that Mr C had already received to be a reasonable contribution to the works.

Mr C also complained that Business Stream had continued to threaten him with disconnection, although he had changed supplier. We found that this was because another property was registered at the same address, and letters were being sent to 'the Occupier'. Business Stream resolved this once the problem was identified. Our investigation found that they had applied their usual procedures for a 'gap' site (a site that has never been billed for water) and we did not uphold this complaint.