

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201303646, Business Stream  
**Sector:** water  
**Subject:** leakage  
**Outcome:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mr C's water consumption went up steadily over several years, and when he started to enquire why this might be, he was told that he had a shared supply. Mr C investigated which property he shared a supply with, but was unable to establish this, partly due to difficulties accessing a neighbouring vacant property. However, when Business Stream's surveyor was shown a meter in the neighbouring property, they continued to say that Mr C had a shared supply. After seven months of investigation, Mr C started to investigate the possibility of a leak, and one was found in the pipe between his property and the meter, underneath some pavement. It took about a week to find and fix this.

Mr C applied for a 'burst allowance' (a refund of some of the costs for the last six months of the leak). He was granted an allowance, but the calculation for the rebate was based on average water consumption during a period including when the leak was still being found and fixed. It did not, therefore, reflect the standard water consumption. Mr C complained that, had Business Stream highlighted the increased consumption earlier, and had they suggested the possibility of a leak when the issue was first raised with them, he would not have had to pay such high bills for so long. He also complained that the burst allowance was inappropriately calculated.

We found that Business Stream could not have known about Mr C's raised water consumption level until he identified this, as the increase in usage was at a level that could have reflected changes in his business. However, we decided that they should have discussed the possibility of a leak with Mr C. Had they done this, he could have investigated and fixed the leak seven months earlier. We also decided that the burst allowance was inappropriately calculated, as the baseline for Mr C's water consumption should not have included the period when the leak was still being fixed.

### Recommendations

We recommended that Business Stream:

- refund Mr C the cost of the excess water consumption on his account for a specified period, based on an average water consumption relating to a period after the leak was fixed;
- refund Mr C the difference in the burst allowance, based on a lower average consumption for the period after the leak was fixed; and
- apologise to Mr C for the time and effort he incurred due to poor information and advice from Business Stream.