

SPSO decision report

Case: 201405581, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: policy/administration
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C had assumed that his charitable organisation did not pay water charges as he said he was never issued with a water bill in any of the organisation's previous addresses. He said that when he received a letter from Business Stream saying that they believed his premises to be empty he phoned and advised them he had occupied the premises since January 2010. Business Stream issued a bill and directed Mr C to information about the 'Scottish Government Exemption Scheme'. However it was discovered that this scheme would not apply to him. Mr C complained and Business Stream's Chief Executive wrote to explain that Business Stream had made several attempts to make contact with him and could not have issued a bill sooner. Business Stream offered to reassess Mr C's charges backdated to January 2010 as a goodwill gesture. Mr C was unhappy with the decision and was unhappy that Business Stream had not replied to some of his letters.

Business Stream told us that they had located Mr C's organisation through the Scottish Assessors Association but could not issue a bill until they had confirmed it. They provided evidence that they had tried to make contact and it was only when Mr C phoned in response to their second letter that they issued a bill. We did not uphold Mr C's complaint that the bill had been unreasonably delayed. We did uphold his complaint that Business Stream had failed to properly handle his complaint as they failed to respond to some of his letters within their procedural timescales. They had already offered compensatory payment and goodwill gestures that we felt were reasonable. We asked them to remind their staff of complaints handling timescales.

Recommendations

We recommended that Business Stream:

- ensure that all relevant staff are reminded of complaints handling timescales; and
- share the outcome of this investigation with all relevant complaints handling staff.