

SPSO decision report

Case: 201500603, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: leakage
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C represented a community organisation which had received an unexpectedly large bill for water use from Business Stream. Mr C said the bill had been delayed as it had been delivered to the wrong address. He felt Business Stream had acted unreasonably, since they had not responded properly to his complaint about the bill. Additionally, Mr C said Business Stream's website committed them to suspending billing and investigating the leak, which had not happened. Mr C said this delay had added a month's worth of water loss to the bill. Mr C was also aware that repairs had been carried out for free on the supply pipe for the previous owner, he considered it unfair that the same discretion was not being applied to a community organisation and believed Business Stream had an obligation to tell the organisation this when they took ownership of the property.

We found that Business Stream had failed to explain what suspension of billing meant to Mr C. They had also failed to carry out an investigation into Mr C's case. We upheld this aspect of Mr C's complaint. We found that Mr C had acknowledged difficulties in receiving mail, but that Business Stream had made reasonable efforts to inform him of the high water usage. Although Business Stream had acknowledged they had taken an unreasonable length of time to respond, Mr C still had outstanding questions, which had not been answered. We found that it was unreasonable for Business Stream to have failed to provide a full response given the length of time the complaint had been under consideration. Therefore, we upheld this part of Mr C's complaint.

Recommendations

We recommended that Business Stream:

- review the 'Water Usage Alerts' section of Business Stream's website to ensure it accurately explains what suspension of billing means and sets out what level of investigation will be carried out;
- provide evidence that all customer service staff have been reminded of the commitments given on the 'Water Usage Alerts' section on Business Stream's website;
- review its offer of financial redress to include the failings that were not addressed in its complaint response;
- review its complaints handling process to ensure that all aspects of a complaint are identified and responded to in line with complaints handling best practice; and
- apologise in writing to Mr C for the failings identified.