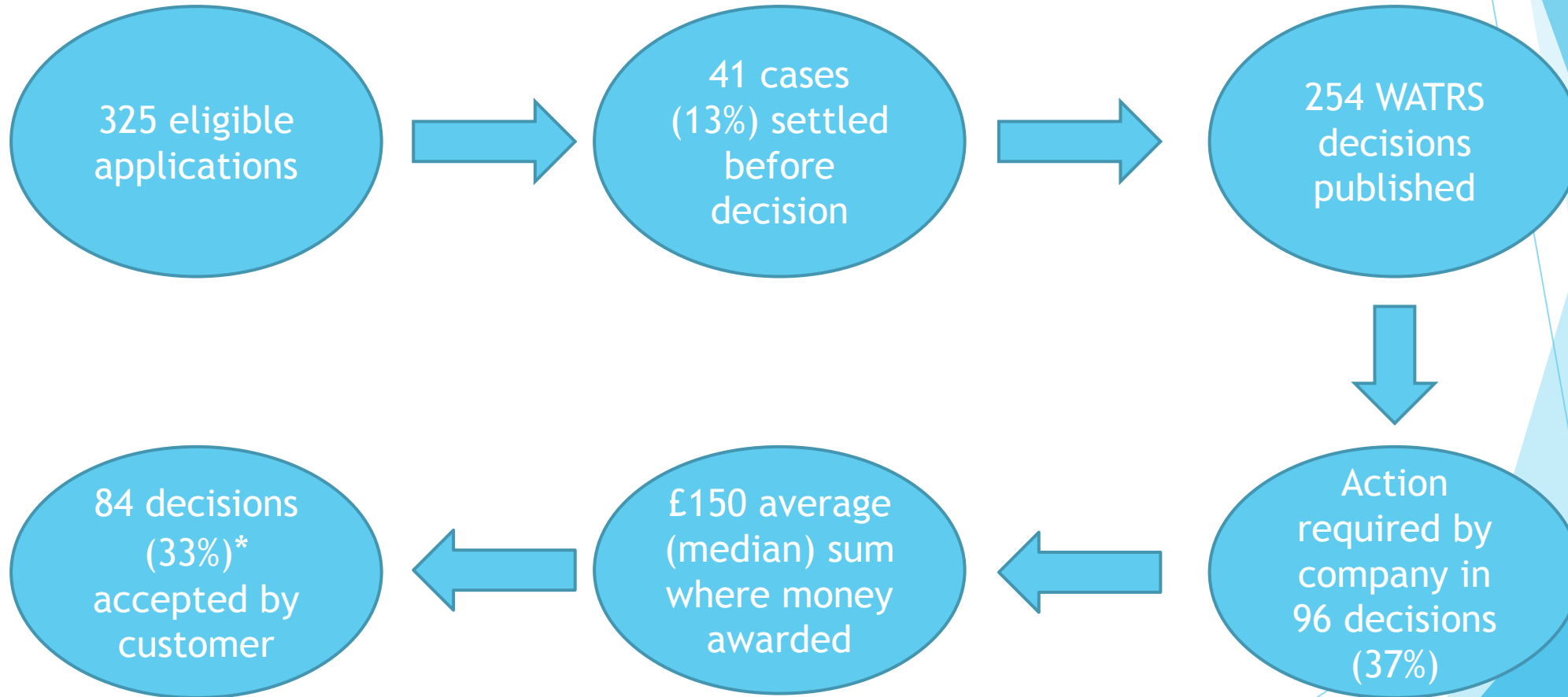


WATRS:SUMMARY OF CASES IN FIRST 2 YEARS 1 April 2015 - 31 March 2017

WATRS Independent Oversight Panel

OVERVIEW OF NUMBERS



*But 65% of *Action Required* decisions were accepted by the customer

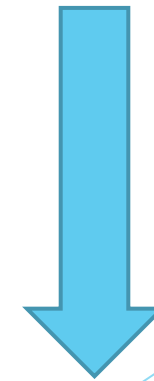
CHANGES FROM 2015-16 TO 2016-17



- Total applications up by 60%
- Proportion of applications from non-household customers up: but only to 15%

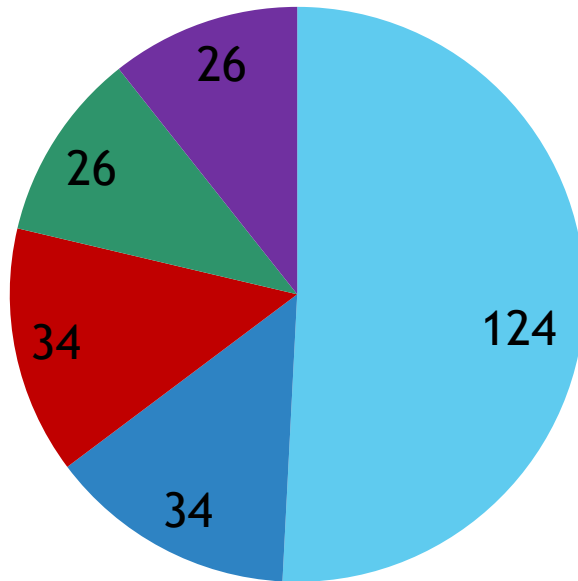
- Proportion of cases settled down by 50%
- Proportion of cases where action required by company down from about half to about one third
- Customer acceptance down from 41% to 30% (in line with point above)

COMMENT: it is possible that these changes could reflect better complaint handling by companies



OVERVIEW BY SUBJECT

Decisions issued



■ billing & charging

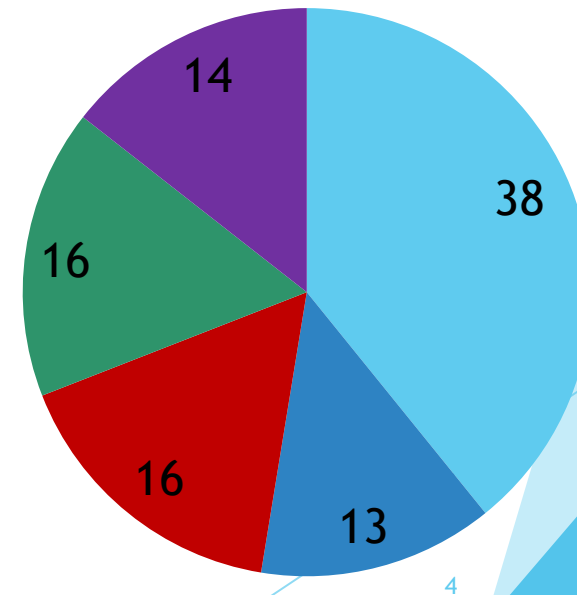
■ metering

■ sewerage

■ water

■ other

Decisions where actions required



4

MORE ABOUT REDRESS

- 96 decisions where action required
 - 48 monetary award only
 - 34 monetary award plus other action
 - 14 non-monetary only
- 10 monetary awards over £1000
- £150 average (median) sum across the 84 decisions where money was awarded.
- 65 decisions where money awarded for Distress and Inconvenience
- £23000 of the total £38170 awarded was for Distress and Inconvenience

MAIN REASONS WHY NO ACTION REQUIRED BY COMPANY

- Customer has not provided evidence to back up claim e.g. photos of water damage
- Adjudicator thinks company has already done enough to make up for what went wrong
- Customer application related to policy matter - company had implemented policy consistently and fairly e.g. switch to metering or tariff change

EXAMPLES OF DISTRESS & INCONVENIENCE AWARDS

- ▶ Poor communication e.g. not making clear customer's responsibility for maintenance; giving different information to neighbours
- ▶ Delays e.g. in conducting investigations, replacing meters, giving refunds
- ▶ Mixing up customers e.g. chasing wrong person for debt
- ▶ Long period of overcharging
- ▶ Administrative errors e.g. repeated failure to call customer back when promised
- ▶ Blaming things on contractor
- ▶ Paying compensation unilaterally when customer has not accepted settlement.

EXAMPLES OF BIGGEST MONETARY AWARDS

The average (median) sum WATRS required companies to pay customers in 2015-1017 (where it made a monetary award) was £150. In many cases the company had already offered or made payments to help resolve the complaint, but the customer wasn't satisfied. On the following slides we give some examples where WATRS directed the company to pay significantly more than it had previously offered.

Case study: billing & charging

Complaint overview

The company had undercharged the customer for 4 years. The customer requested a reduction in the amount owing on his account. The company accepted that it had charged the customer incorrectly, but said that it had already rectified the errors and offered the customer compensation. The company did not accept that the customer was entitled to any reduction in the outstanding balance on his account.

Outcome and reasons

The company needed to take further action. The adjudicator noted that these failures were significant and took place over a long period.

Remedy awarded

£700 - applied as a reduction from the customer's outstanding balance.

Case study: billing & charging

Complaint overview

A business customer claimed that the company had charged her a Site Area charge based on an incorrect band for over 7 years. The customer said she had not had any correspondence from the company about the introduction of the Site Area charge. The customer was charged under Band 4; after she queried this the company eventually reduced it to Band 2. The company said its Charges Scheme limited refunds to the start of the charging year in which the mistake was notified, and the customer had been refunded around £1200 for that year accordingly. The company said it had contacted all customers in 2007 to inform them of the new Site Area charge and how to make contact if the area charged did not appear correct.

Outcome and reasons

The company needed to take further action. It did provide information on its website but was unable to show that the customer had received information. It was entitled to limit refunds to the start of the charging year but had delayed in providing that refund and had failed to provide sufficient information to the customer about the change in charging process.

Remedy awarded

£1000 of which £900 was compensation for incorrect billing over a long period and lack of information; and £100 for the delay in the refund it gave.

Case study: water

Complaint overview

There had been a long-running dispute about charges and about whether the company damaged a kitchen cabinet and caused a leak when it fitted, and later removed, an internal meter to check that the external meter was recording correctly. The company denied responsibility but nonetheless offered a goodwill payment of £20 for the cabinet and also offered to cover a bill of £180 from the customer's own plumber.

Outcome and reasons

The adjudicator found that these payments should go ahead plus compensation, because the company was probably responsible for poor workmanship and failed to explain adequately that condensation from the meter caused moisture.

Remedy awarded

An apology plus £300: £180 for plumber, £20 for cabinet and a further £100 compensation for distress & inconvenience.

Case study: water (NB this case is from August 2017)

Complaint overview

A leak occurred after installation of a water meter. An independent reviewer estimated the damage repair cost at £900.00 + VAT. The company's agent who installed the meter accepted liability and offered £500.00 for the repairs. The customer wanted a further £500.00 in compensation from the company. The company refused and suggested that the customer could make a claim on his insurance to cover the cost of the repairs.

Outcome and reasons

The company must take action. The adjudicator found that the company was liable for the work of its agent; it had failed to provide its services to the customer to the standard to be reasonably expected by the average person; and the customer had suffered financial loss as a result. It was for the customer to choose whether to claim on his insurance.

Remedy awarded

Compensation of £500 as requested

Case study: sewerage

Complaint overview

The customer's claim concerned an odour in his property following works carried out by the company to a nearby sewer pipe. The customer said that the company had provided poor customer service in relation to his complaint. The customer sought £10,000 and an apology.

The company stated that it had already paid various expenses for the customer and offered £1,000 compensation.

Outcome and reasons

The company needed to take further action. The adjudicator found that although the company had made reasonable attempts to investigate and rectify the problem, the customer had been greatly inconvenienced by the matter over 3 months (including the Christmas period). Also the company had failed to respond to the customer's written correspondence in a timely manner and to address his requests for information/clarification.

Remedy awarded

£2000 and a written apology

Case study: other - infrastructure

Complaint overview

The customer had a structural crack in her property, and surveys indicated the cause to be the company's sewer. The customer requested the company survey the sewer in November 2013. There were numerous delays and the customer finally received a copy of the survey in July 2016. The customer was unable to repair or sell the house whilst the survey remained outstanding.

The company accepted that there had been delays in providing the survey; but the survey showed that the sewer did not cause the issue with the customer's property. It had offered the customer substantial compensation but this had not been accepted.

Outcome and findings

The company needed to take further action. There were numerous delays in conducting the survey and providing a copy to the customer. The company did not take action to progress the survey when faced with uncooperative neighbours. The communication was not clear.

Remedy awarded

£1700 (£1459 for distress and inconvenience plus £241 survey fee) and GSS payment of £160. This was around £500 more than the company had offered.