

SPSO decision report

Case: 201105291, Business Stream Ltd
Sector: scottish government and devolved administration
Subject: debt recovery / payment fees
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C said that until Business Stream contacted him, he was unaware of his liability to pay water/waste charges to them. He said he had asked for a site visit but no-one came. He then received a bill backdated to May 2008 but the supply address was incorrect and he was concerned that he was being charged for the wrong premises. He said he had been in the same premises since 2007 and did not understand why it had taken Business Stream so long to realise he was there. He also said that they had given him conflicting information by assuring him that his account was on hold while his complaints were looked into, then pursuing him for payment and charges.

From 1 April 2008 all businesses with a water/waste supply are obliged to register with a licensed provider and pay for their service. The fact that Mr C was unaware of his responsibility to do so does not affect the fact that he is liable for water charges. We found no evidence that he had requested a site visit or of any undertaking from Business Stream to perform one. Business Stream said that as another street ran onto the street where Mr C's premises are located there may have been an input error into their system. They confirmed that the water meter concerned serves only Mr C's premises, and they amended the address on their system to ensure that the correct address appears on future bills. They also explained that they picked this up during an initiative to identify businesses that were not registered with a licensed provider (in which case Business Stream becomes the licensed provider by default). Business Stream confirmed that Mr C's account was on hold while his complaints were investigated. We did not uphold any of Mr C's complaints as we were satisfied that Business Stream had followed the appropriate procedures.