

**Case:** 201101754, Business Stream Ltd  
**Sector:** scottish government and devolved administration  
**Subject:** meter reading  
**Outcome:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mr C runs a car sales business and uses a building to store vehicles. Scottish Water identified his premises as a gap site and made arrangements for a meter to be fitted to begin charging for water. A fitter visited the premises and installed the meter above a sink in the building. Business Stream were then contacted to set up a business account for Mr C.

During a cold spell, the meter's fittings burst and flooded the premises, causing damage. Mr C complained that he received no prior notice that he would require a water meter or that it would be fitted in his premises. He said he was not given the opportunity to choose a licensed provider for his water account. He also complained that the meter was fitted incorrectly, and that he was given no information about his responsibilities for its maintenance. Mr C submitted an insurance claim, but this was rejected on the basis that the meter was installed correctly and the problem had been caused by extreme weather.

Business Stream acknowledged that Mr C was not given notice of Scottish Water's arrival to fit the meter, but said that this was not possible as Scottish Water would not have the customer's details at that point. They explained that it was Mr C's responsibility to maintain the meter and to protect it from the cold weather. This information is held in their terms and conditions on their website.

We found that Scottish Water did not properly follow the correct process for supplying newly identified gap sites. Customers should be contacted in advance and given the opportunity to choose their preferred licensed provider. This did not happen in Mr C's case. With regard to the burst water meter, whilst it is not for this office to determine whether the unit was installed correctly, we did not consider it reasonable to expect Mr C to visit Business Stream's website in order to look up their terms and conditions for specific details as to how to maintain the meter. We felt that this information could have been provided at

the point of installation. We also upheld Mr C's complaint that Business Stream's handling of his complaint was poor.

### **Recommendations**

We recommended that Business Stream:

- apologise to Mr C for the issues highlighted in our decision letter;
- take steps to ensure that customers are provided with information regarding maintenance of water meters either at the point of installation or when their account is opened;
- share our decision with Scottish Water to ensure that the central marketing agency's procedure for allocating gap sites identified by them is properly followed; and
- pay Mr C a sum equivalent to the total of his initial insurance claim plus any fees incurred for the disconnection of his water supply.