

SPSO decision report

Case: 201200566, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: incorrect billing
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained that Business Stream had acted inappropriately in charging extra when a meter was discovered to be connected to her premises, in not notifying her earlier that there was a meter and in taking money from her account without prior notification.

During our investigation we found that, due to an error, Business Stream had failed to take action when they were notified that a meter was in place. The error was not identified until a few years later. Business Stream accepted that the change from an unmetered service to a full metered service had resulted in an increase in water charges. In line with legislation, they could backdate this for five years, but as a gesture of goodwill they decided to phase in the metered charges over a three year period rather than charging Ms C immediately for them. We found no evidence that Business Stream had failed to adhere to the direct debit guarantee, but we were concerned that Ms C's account was not changed to a metered service when Business Stream were first notified that there was a meter and that when the error was discovered they failed to contact Ms C.

Recommendations

We recommended that Business Stream:

- apologise to Ms C for the failure to take action in 2009 following notification that a meter had been installed at the property and their failure to contact her when the error was discovered.