

SPSO decision report

Case: 201204450, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: incorrect billing
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C was a Business Stream customer. She complained that they gave her poor advice when she moved premises about the difference it would make going from metered to unmetered property. She said that this resulted in her paying almost twice as much for their services. Ms C said that when she realised this, she arranged to have a meter installed, and a repayment plan, and discussed a reduction of the payments. Despite this arrangement, a collection agency contacted her about the debt. When she complained to Business Stream, Ms C was told that the sum agreed for repayment was too small, and that she could not have the bill reduced through reassessment. Ms C complained to us that she did not receive clear advice from Business Stream about having a meter fitted, and that they failed to address her complaint about changing the payment agreement.

In our investigation we were unable to verify what Ms C said she had been told during a phone call with Business Stream, because there was no record of the call. We noted that she had phoned, and had requested a call back. She had received an email with advice to check their website for information if she wished to apply for a meter, which accorded with our understanding of the standard of service required of them. However, we took the view that if, as she claimed, she was told that it was not to her benefit to have a meter installed for her current premises, it was understandable if she did not check this out with any urgency. We upheld her complaints because of the failure to record the phone conversation, and subsequent failure to respond fully to her complaints. We took into consideration that Business Stream did not respond to this when we asked them to comment.

Recommendations

We recommended that Business Stream:

- issue a formal apology to Ms C for the failings identified in our investigation;
- implement improvements to their record-keeping;
- pay Ms C £100 for their failure to respond fully to her complaint;
- fully investigate Ms C's complaint and apologise for not having done so before; and
- depending on the outcome of the investigation, consider making Ms C a further, ex-gratia, payment.