

SPSO decision report

Case: 201204520, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: debt recovery / payment fees
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C's complaint was made on behalf of a charity, who had received an unexpected bill from Business Stream for water service charges two years after they moved into their premises. Mr C complained both that the charity was being incorrectly pursued for charges because an exemption had been applied in their previous premises, and about the action taken by Business Stream to pursue payment, including threatening disconnection. He also complained of delay in issuing invoices, and confusion about the number of meters serving the premises, resulting in the wrong charges being pursued. He also said that there had been delay in resolving a separate error when invoices for other companies had been received at the charity's address.

From our investigation, we established that while the charity had discussed whether exemption applied, they had not provided evidence to support this or submitted a claim for exemption. We upheld the complaint about disconnection, however, as our investigation found that Business Stream had sent a letter to the premises in which disconnection was threatened if it was found that the premises were unoccupied, despite having known for some six months that they were occupied by the charity. We also found that invoices had been issued wrongly for two meters when the premises had only one, and that Business Stream had failed to explain this when they issued an invoice for amended charges. We did not uphold the complaint about the charity receiving mail for another company, as we found that Business Stream had addressed this.

Recommendations

We recommended that Business Stream:

- apologise for the inaccurate and misleading letter; and
- contact the charity to discuss any remaining queries they may have about usage.