

SPSO decision report

Case: 201204615, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: incorrect billing
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained on behalf of a charity that Business Stream did not close the relevant water account when the charity notified them that they had closed one of their shops. As a result of this, Business Stream continued to charge for the shop's water supply until the charity contacted them again, some 14 months after the shop had closed. Ms C sent us evidence that the charity had called Business Stream around the time the shop closed, and said that the call was to tell them of the closure. Business Stream said that they had no record of this. We examined their records and found that there was no evidence that Business Stream had been told that the shop had been closed at that time.

We examined the relevant legislation and Business Stream's policies. These were clear that the account should be closed from when Business Stream were told that the shop had closed, unless someone else moved into the property and started to pay the water charges, or a meter reading was due to be carried out. Business Stream told us that no one else had occupied the property during the relevant period. They also said that there was no meter in the property and that it was billed on assessed charges (based on the size of the property, the facilities and the number of staff employed).

We asked Business Stream for their comments on the evidence Ms C had sent us. They said that had no record of this call and that they could not comment further on it. They said that they had adhered to their policies in respect of closing the account from the date they were told that the charity had moved out. They said that there was insufficient evidence that they had been notified at the time the shop closed and that they would not be backdating the charge. However, they agreed to remove the debt recovery charge they had added to the account. Our role is to consider if there has been administrative error or service failure by an organisation. As there was no record that Business Stream had received notification that the charity shop had closed at that time, we did not consider that there was any evidence of administrative error or service failure on their part, and so we did not uphold the complaint.