

SPSO decision report

Case: 201300782, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: incorrect billing
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

When Mr C and his wife moved into their house in 2005 they started a bed and breakfast business. A water supply meter had previously been installed and Mr C told Scottish Water that he wished to retain that supply. The market in licensed water suppliers opened up in 2008, but Business Stream (the default licensed supplier) did not contact Mr C until 2011. They then did not invoice him until March 2013 when they charged him for water and waste water for the five years from 1 April 2008. The readings on which Mr C's charges were calculated were initially inaccurate and in total some 12 invoices were sent to him.

Mr C was dissatisfied with how Business Stream responded to his complaint and complained to us that they had failed to provide adequate, actual meter readings throughout the five year period and had failed to act promptly in respect of his bills. We upheld both of his complaints. Our investigation found that although eleven meter readings were taken between April 2007 and January 2013, Mr C did not receive a bill until March 2013, and when he did, it was wrong. Even though Mr C had contacted them in 2012 and established that water charges were appropriate, Business Stream still did not act quickly enough to let him know how much he was due to pay.

Recommendations

We recommended that Business Stream:

- apologise to Mr C for not taking action to resolve matters in 2012 and comply with his wish to go on to e-billing and direct payments, and for not responding to the matters he raised in one of his letters; and
- agree to settle on the basis of a particular invoice less a five percent sum in respect of e-billing reductions for consumption, and a suitable allowance for waste water charges at the time of a water supply leak, in terms of the Burst Allowance Policy.