

## SPSO decision report



**Case:** 201902019, Castle Water Ltd  
**Sector:** Water  
**Subject:** incorrect billing  
**Decision:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

C has two properties registered with Castle Water (Property A and Property B). C said they were given a quote for one year of water services which they paid immediately. Castle Water used the payment for one address to cover bills on both properties. C said they were then told the amount quoted was to cover to the end of the financial year, not the calendar year, and C said this was never explained to them. C said there was no explanation why the funds which were to cover a distinct property were used for another property.

Castle Water said that C had not been overcharged and the charges were due and payable.

We found that C selected 'monthly' billing when they signed up Property B. C meant to select 'annual' billing. This caused some confusion as Castle Water were billing C for Property B in the manner they had requested, taking funds off the credit in the account. C also paid the quote for Property B before the account transferred, meaning there was some confusion about where the money should be allocated to. C's actions contributed to the confusion, however, C was told the credit would be transferred to the property once the transfer of provider completed and this did not happen. C was also given different explanations about what their payments would cover and were twice given quotes for a calendar year, which Castle Water do not provide.

We found that Castle Water failed to take ownership of the situation and resolve it properly. There had not been a clear, accurate, unchanging explanation of what had happened, why and what C ultimately owes.

As such, we upheld the complaint.

### Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for providing poor initial advice when C moved their second property to Castle Water, being unclear about how their early payment would be used and failing to resolve that confusion. Also for failing to consistently and accurately explain what had happened at each stage, and why. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at [www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets](http://www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets).
- In light of the significant communication failings, Castle Water should recalculate what C owes, based on estimated charges with the applicable discount and invoice them for this. They should cancel late fees, disconnection charges and reconnect the supply if C would like this.

What we said should change to put things right in future:

- Consider having a mechanism in place which prompts an early review of communications in the event of billing disputes, to identify inconsistency of explanation.
- Information about billing arrangements for customers should be clear.

We have asked the organisation to provide us with evidence that they have implemented the recommendations we have made on this case by the deadline we set.