

## SPSO decision report



**Case:** 202103298, Business Stream  
**Sector:** Water  
**Subject:** Incorrect billing  
**Decision:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

C runs a small business and was unhappy with the way Business Stream managed their account. In particular, C was unhappy with what they believe were unreasonable changes to their contract and changes to the amount they were expected to pay for water.

We found multiple failings by Business Stream in their dealings with C; including not taking reasonable steps to address the issue of the removal of the water meter for C's premises, having no evidence that C agreed to a change of contract or agreeing to online billing only. In relation to moving C to unmetered charging, Business Stream have acknowledged that their failures led to an unacceptable delay and offered the maximum allowable payment and credit available under their Redress and Compensation Policy. However, there is no evidence that the causes of the failings have been investigated or identified. We considered that this was essential given the impact on small businesses of large and unexpected bills, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. We upheld C's complaint.

### Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Contact C to provide a clear explanation of their options for paying for water usage moving forward, including a site visit with C present to discuss water meter installation if requested.

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

- A review of C's case identifying where Business Stream's procedures failed to work appropriately and assessing whether changes are required to prevent a recurrence.
- A review of the process for agreeing 'signatureless' contracts to ensure that the customer's agreement is obtained and formally recorded in a retrievable format.
- All staff involved in moving customers onto new contracts to be reminded that it is essential evidence is retained showing the customer's agreement.

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.