

SPSO decision report

Case: 201407015, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: charging method / calculation
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained about Business Stream's delay in sending bills to her for her business premises. She said that the first correspondence she received from Business Stream was a notice saying that her water was to be disconnected, which was issued over a year after she moved in. There was no water meter in the premises and, when the bills were issued, they were based on the rateable value. Mrs C could have applied for reassessment of her water charges, but the charges would only have been reassessed from when her application for this was received. She considered that the delay in issuing bills to her meant that her water charges were higher.

Mrs C provided us with an email that the previous tenant of the property had sent to Business Stream to inform them that Mrs C had moved in. She also sent us a copy of an email that Business Stream had sent to her, in which they had requested that Scottish Water attend the premises and that she confirm that the contact details provided by the previous tenant were correct. Mrs C did not respond to this email and Business Stream had continued to issue bills for the property to the billing address provided by the previous tenant.

Business Stream told us that, like other utility providers, they require customers to contact them when they take over a premises; however, they also acknowledged that, in Mrs C's case, they should have acted more proactively to close the previous account and open an account for Mrs C as soon as they were advised that she had taken over the premises. We found that Business Stream had failed to take appropriate follow-up action after they received the email from the previous tenant and we upheld Mrs C's complaint.

Recommendations

We recommended that Business Stream:

- issue a written apology to Mrs C for the failure to take appropriate action after they received the email from the previous tenant; and
- reimburse her for 50 percent of the additional charges she incurred as a result of their failure to take appropriate action after they received this email.