

SPSO decision report

Case: 201810594, Clear Business Water
Sector: Water
Subject: incorrect billing
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

C received waste and water services from Clear Business Water (CBW). C was charged for waste and water services for two supply point identification (SPID) pairs for their rented property. C complained because they did not consider that this was reasonable, as they considered they only had one SPID pair associated with their property.

While there were elements of this complaint which stemmed from third party information provided to CBW, we found that CBW failed to bill C reasonably for their water charges. There were failings to identify the duplicate SPID pair earlier in C's contact with CBW, and when C was invoiced for the duplicate SPID, insufficient information was provided to explain the significant bill. We upheld this aspect of the complaint.

We found that CBW failed to reasonably communicate with C. C was charged a significant amount of money with no explanation as to why this was being raised and what SPID or period of time this was in reference to. In addition, CBW continued to pursue C via Universal Debt Collection for payment of the account, despite the account being put on hold. This was unreasonable. Therefore, we upheld this aspect of C's complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for the failings as identified in this complaint. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.
- Calculate and credit C's account based on the pseudo meter rate (as applicable) and going forward (omitting the period given) until such time as a meter is installed at the premises/a further reassessment is undertaken.
- Consider whether to offer C a goodwill gesture payment for the length of time take to resolve the issue.
- Reimburse C for any overdue payment charges levied on the account.

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

- When CBW issues bills for SPIDs not previously charged to customers they should explain why they are charging them, the SPID reference and the period for which they are charging.
- When it is possible there are multiple (incorrect) Scottish Assessors Association entries for one premises CBW should take appropriate action to investigate the matter and inform the customer.
- Where a duplicate SPID is identified customers should not be disadvantaged if the SPID with the pseudo meter is de-registered and a clear explanation provided with the options available moving forward.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- CBW should have a clear understanding of why a complainant is complaining before responding to a

complaint.

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.