

SPSO decision report

Case: 201202879, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: charging method / calculation
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained to us on behalf of his clients, Company A. Company A had been in a property since October 2008. They were not aware they should be paying for water and Business Stream first contacted them in January 2012. They then discovered that the property had not had a meter until June 2009 which meant they would be billed at a higher rate between October 2008 and June 2009. They also found out that, as their meter was installed under the Scottish Government's full metering programme, for the first few years they were billed on a phased basis, and not on a metered basis. They complained that the developers of the property had requested a meter in March 2008, and if it had been installed then they would not have been billed under this scheme but under the previous system (ie billed on a meter from October 2008). They also complained about the delay in receiving bills between October 2008 and January 2012.

The phased charging and full metering programme were Scottish Government policy and we would only be able to uphold a complaint about this if it was clear there had been a failure to install a meter under the old scheme. The developers of the property confirmed in writing they had made this request. However, there was no evidence available from 2008 to show what had happened. Nor was there any evidence that anyone followed up this request to see why no meter had been installed. In the absence of any clear evidence, we did not find there had been any failure to install the meter.

The bills had not been issued for some time. However, in August 2008 when Business Stream become the licensed provider for the property, it was noted as vacant and no bills were due, as they would only bill an occupied property. It was the responsibility of Company A to let Business Stream know when they moved in, but in October 2008 they did not do so. The metering programme then meant that a meter was installed in June 2009. However, meters were installed on all non-domestic properties, whether vacant or occupied, and there was no scheme to check the status. The main responsibility for ensuring that Company A were paying for services they were using remained with Company A themselves.