

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201402001, Business Stream  
**Sector:** water  
**Subject:** incorrect billing  
**Outcome:** some upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mr and Mrs C have a workshop attached to their house. After receiving advice from the Central Market Agency, who hold records of the licensed water supplier of every business customer in Scotland, Business Stream became aware that there was a liability for commercial water services at the site. However, Business Stream only became aware of who occupied the property when they undertook an audit and then issued a bill to Mr and Mrs C for water charges, which they backdated to October 2010.

Mr and Mrs C complained to us that Business Stream had acted unreasonably in the delay in telling them that charges were due; levied charges for water services they had never had; failed to provide consistent and clear advice about the charges; and failed to respond promptly to their complaint.

We found that there was a responsibility on both Mr and Mrs C and Business Stream in relation to billing for water services. On Mr and Mrs C's part it was to tell Business Stream that they occupied the premises, and on Business Stream's part it was to act promptly when they receive details of business premises where there have not been previous water charges. Business Stream told us that they accepted that their process could have been better, but they had taken action to make improvements. Overall we did not uphold the complaint, taking into account that Mr and Mrs C would have been billed earlier if they had approached Business Stream about providing water and waste water services.

We found that Business Stream had made appropriate enquiries with Scottish Water about Mr and Mrs C's liability, and had asked for payment based on the advice they received. However, we found that there had been confusion and inconsistency in the advice given about the charges due, for which Business Stream had apologised, and agreed to credit Mr and Mrs C's account with a small payment in line with their commitment to meet a certain level of service.

We also upheld the complaint about the complaints handling, having found that there was a failure to respond to a request for a phone call from a manager. In recognition of this, Business Stream agreed to a further small payment in line with their services standards.

### Recommendations

We recommended that Business Stream:

- make the two payments offered to Mr and Mrs C in recognition of the failure to meet commitments under the service standards.