

SPSO decision report

Case: 201608893, Aimeria Ltd
Sector: water
Subject: incorrect billing
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C moved into business premises and she received a phone call from Aimeria Ltd, advising that they were the licensed water provider for the premises. Ms C provided a meter reading, but did not at that stage receive any information about her contract, terms and conditions or the charges she could expect to pay. Two months later Ms C was asked for another meter reading, which she provided. She then heard nothing further for another two months, when she received an invoice. She disputed the amount due and ultimately brought her complaints to us.

Aimeria Ltd explained that there had been a discrepancy between the last meter reading and the one provided by Ms C. They said that this required further investigation, which resulted in a delay in an invoice being issued. We found that the delay was unreasonable, and we also found that Ms C should have been sent details of the deemed contract she was under, which would have given her information about the charges she could expect, as well as giving her the opportunity to consider her options with regards to alternative water suppliers.

We upheld Ms C's complaints about Aimeria's failure to provide information about the account, failure to provide information about the possibility of changing supplier, failure to meet the terms of the deemed contract, and the delay in issuing the initial invoice.

Ms C also complained about Aimeria Ltd's application of the wrong Rateable Value (RV) of the premises when calculating her invoice. The RV had changed, but Aimeria were billing with reference to the original RV. We accepted Aimeria's explanation that it was the responsibility of the proprietor or tenant to notify them of any such changes. We were satisfied that as soon as Aimeria were notified of the change they had applied it and had issued a revised invoice. We did not uphold this complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Provide Ms C with a formal apology for the shortcomings in the way her account was handled and the delays in providing her with an initial invoice. The apology should comply with the SPSO guidelines on making an apology, available at www.spsso.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance.

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.