

SPSO decision report

Case: 201802881, Clear Business Water
Sector: water
Subject: incorrect billing
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained that he was unreasonably billed by Clear Business Water (CBW), despite having paid his water bills regularly. He also complained about the way CBW had pursued payment of the disputed amount.

We found that Mr C's accounts had previously been inaccurately recorded by another water provider. However, we found that CBW had explained the reason for the outstanding sum and that Mr C had used the water that payment was being requested for. We did not uphold this aspect of the complaint.

In relation to CBW's debt collection process, we found that it was confusing and unreasonable and therefore upheld this aspect of the complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mr C for the failings identified in this case. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance.
- Review a good will gesture, showing consideration has been given to all the service failures identified in our decision.

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

- CBW need to ensure correspondence sent out by Universal Debt Collection accurately identifies the relationship between the two organisations and sets out clearly and accurately what the debt recovery process is.
- CBW need a written debt recovery procedure, which sets out clearly the timescales and actions they will take when pursuing payment. This should include a clear explanation of when an account will be passed to external agencies for recovery.

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.