

SPSO decision report



Case: 202408977, Clear Business Water
Sector: Water
Subject: Incorrect billing
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

C complained that the disconnection date of their water supply was not accurately reflected in their billing. C owned a dog grooming studio that had ceased trading. C said that the original supply to this building was from their home. C had always paid correctly for any water usage. When the business closed, the building was being converted for domestic use. The water supply had been physically disconnected and the building was uninhabitable.

C and Clear Business Water (CBW) were in dispute over fixed water charges for the premises. CBW's position was that a property could not be disconnected until Scottish Water registered it as such. C believed that they had been clear at the outset that this was what they required but CBW had not responded reasonably to C's request, meaning that they had been subject to fixed charges over an extended period.

We found that CBW did not make it clear to C that they had the option of de-registering their water connection or applying for permanent disconnection. Had this been done at the earliest opportunity, the responsibility would have lain with C to decide what action to take. We also found that CBW failed to challenge Scottish Water's refusal to back date charges sufficiently, given that C as their customer was unable to raise a dispute directly with Scottish Water. We upheld C's complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for the failures identified in this investigation. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/meaningful-apologies.
- Refund C's charges back to the date specified, as set out in their email to Scottish Water requesting backdating of charges.

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

- Customers should be provided with all the information they need to make informed decisions about their accounts.

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.