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1.0 Billing

1.1

C received a final electricity bill from a supplier which showed an outstanding balance even though C had a pre-payment meter. The supplier explained that as C's meter had not been updated, the charges were in respect of price rises that had occurred, but which had not been reflected on the meter. C disputed the charges. The supplier applied a credit to reduce the balance as a gesture of goodwill, which C considered to be inadequate. C requested that all charges be removed. C also complained that the supplier had failed to refund a credit balance on the gas account.

The Ombudsman considered failure to update C's pre-payment meter was reflective of a shortfall in customer service. It was considered C would have been aware of price increases and that the meter had not been recalibrated to reflect these. However, the available evidence did not show that the supplier had informed C of price increases at the time they occurred and it was considered C may not have been aware of the debit accruing on the account.

The supplier was required to send a letter of apology, apply a further credit as a gesture of goodwill in respect of the charges C had incurred trying to resolve the complaint and the shortfall in customer service experienced. It was also required to confirm that, to date, C's credit rating had not been affected, provide C with an explanation of the charges and refund any credit balance on C's account.

1.2

C complained that a default was made on C's credit history despite a payment plan being in place. The Ombudsman noted however C failed to maintain repayments and the default was correctly registered. The supplier withdrew the default and credited the outstanding balance in goodwill in settlement to the complaint. C continued to complain as a loan had been rejected due to the default. The Ombudsman concludes no further action was required by the supplier as C agreed to the loan despite being offered the reorganisation fee refund for the loan after the default had been removed.

The supplier failed to calculate C's initial bills due to problems with meter readings. The supplier corrected its calculations and then set up a direct debit instruction. However this instruction was set up too low and C accrued arrears. The Ombudsman accepts that the supplier delayed and offered the equivalent of six months payments which she considered reasonable settlement to the complaint. In light of the costs C incurred when seeking resolution to the complaints the supplier made a goodwill gesture.

The Ombudsman concludes there has been a shortfall in customer service in the handling of this case.

In summary the Ombudsman required SP to ensure the goodwill credit has been applied in addition to the payment in recognition of the contact costs incurred and make an additional goodwill credit in light of the poor customer service demonstrated on this case and the inconvenience caused.

1.3

The supplier failed to update and administer its accounts accurately and C's expectations were raised when a large credit refund was promised. C wrote a cheque in advance against this promised refund and incurred bank charges as a result. The Ombudsman considered the supplier failed to administer the account correctly and use the correct meter details. On the statement summary in question, it was apparent C had not been charged for usage for over a year. The Ombudsman considered this a service failure. The Ombudsman considered the previous goodwill offer made to C was very generous.

In summary the Ombudsman required the supplier to maintain its previous offer of goodwill gesture.

5.0 Billing - Inaccurate Invoices

5.1

C had two meters however the supplier removed a meter on request. However, the supplier failed to update its system to reflect this action. Another supplier then transferred the meter to its provision in error. On the return of the MPAN through the ET process the supplier then opened a new account, in error. SP sent out an inaccurate final statement. C incurred costs and suffered inconvenience when seeking resolution to the complaint.

In summary the Ombudsman required the supplier to issue a goodwill payment by cheque and a formal letter of apology.

6.0 Billing - Inaccurate Meter Reading

6.1

C's electricity meter was replaced and a final reading on the old meter was taken by an engineer. C received a bill for charges significantly in excess of the usual charges and considered the final meter reading to be incorrect. The supplier confirmed the reading it held matched the reading provided by the engineer. However, following intervention by the CAB, the supplier agreed to recalculate the due balance based on information held about C's usage. However, C failed to receive an amended bill and SP sent a payment

reminder and a disconnection notice. C complained, and the supplier advised C the meter reading could not be changed. It applied a small credit to C's account as a gesture of goodwill in respect of the inconvenience C had experienced. C remained unhappy, but the Suppliers Trust Fund applied a payment to the account in excess of the outstanding balance. However, C continued to dispute the accuracy of the meter reading and wanted a payment for the stress and inconvenience incurred.

The Ombudsman was satisfied C had not had to pay the balance of the account and that the supplier Trust Fund had credited the account in full. It was noted SP had provided C with misleading information and that it had failed to adjust the reading as a gesture of goodwill even though it had informed C this would be done. The Ombudsman considered C had experienced an unsatisfactory level of customer care. However, the credits the supplier had already applied to the account were deemed reasonable and no further payment was required, although the supplier was required to send a letter of apology.

8.0 Billing - Lack of Information

8.1

The supplier failed to administer the accounts correctly and used very inaccurate estimated readings despite reading the meter on two occasions, it failed to issue a bill and C had to chase the release, meaning C did not receive an accurate bill for over six months. The supplier admitted this was an oversight. The Ombudsman concluded that the supplier failed to provide an adequate level of administration and customer service on this case.

In summary the Ombudsman required the supplier to review preset estimates to a more accurate level in line with C's usage, issue a specific letter of explanation that addresses C's queries and investigate if the goodwill gesture was credited to the account, if not then action this credit accordingly.

25.0 Transfer - Incorrect Action Taken

25.1

C signed a contract to transfer supplier but decided to cancel within an hour. The supplier continued to take over the supplies and has sent bills out after it advised C that an Erroneous Transfer (ET) would be arranged and the supplies returned to C's preferred supplier.

In summary the Ombudsman requires the supplier to make a goodwill credit in light of the failure to meet the ET Charter; make a goodwill gesture in recognition of the customer service issues raised; and issue a formal letter of apology confirming that C is

not a customer and an assurance that C's credit history has not been adversely affected by its actions.

26.0 Transfer - Incorrect Billing

26.1

C complained that when an account was closed they were due a refund from the supplier; it stated the payment had been sent, but C never received it. C complained and the supplier found that it had been sent to the wrong address. It sent a replacement, but C did not receive this either. The supplier acknowledged there had been a shortfall in customer service and offered a goodwill payment.