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## **1.0 Billing**

### **1.1**

The supplier did not read C's meter for five years. C received a bill for charges considerably in excess of previous bills. The supplier confirmed this was due to it having under estimated C's usage for the previous year. C disputed the charges and considered the supplier's assessment of energy consumption to be high. The supplier applied a credit as a gesture of goodwill, but considered C was liable for the remaining balance.

The Ombudsman considered the supplier's failure to read C's meter to be reflective of a shortfall in customer service but concluded that the credit the supplier had applied as a gesture of goodwill was reasonable. The meter readings provided by C suggested C's electricity usage had increased significantly for almost a year, then decreased again. There was insufficient evidence available to explain the reasons for this, but C was considered to be liable for the outstanding charges. However, it was noted the supplier had also failed to respond to C's letters and had provided C with incorrect information. The supplier was required to send a letter of apology, apply a small goodwill gesture and provide C with the opportunity to arrange a payment plan.

### **1.**

The supplier used an incorrect reading when exchanging C's prepayment for a credit meter. The supplier issued a large bill that was not due. On receipt of the correct reading the supplier failed to correct the account and passed the inaccurate debt for recovery action. The supplier failed to take ownership of the complaint and the matter became protracted. The Ombudsman considers this case was poorly administered and C suffered a shortfall in customer service.

In summary the Ombudsman requires the supplier to make a goodwill gesture; ensure the account is recalled from debt recovery action; and issue a formal letter of apology, including an assurance this matter has not affected C's credit rating.

KEYWORDS BILLING METER EXCHANGE INCORRECT READINGS request not actioned

### **1.3**

The supplier incorrectly billed C by using an inaccurate reading from a very old dial meter. C repeatedly requested a new meter and explanations of the large bill to no avail. C actively sought resolution to the complaint incurring costs and experiencing further inconvenience. Had the supplier addressed C's issues from the outset the billing issue could have been avoided. The supplier did agree to change the meter.

In summary the Ombudsman consider the supplier failed to provide an adequate level of customer service and in acknowledgement requires the supplier to make a further goodwill credit and issue a formal letter of apology.

## **6.0 Billing - Inaccurate Meter Reading**

### **6.1**

C's pre-payment gas and electricity meters were exchanged for credit meters. C was advised it would take up to two weeks for the supplier to obtain the necessary information required to open C's energy accounts, set up direct debit and issue bills. Despite contacting the supplier several times, C failed to receive bills and was unable to set up a direct debit.

The supplier acknowledged the delay in setting up C's account. It explained this was due to an issue with information provided by the Meter Operator. However, it confirmed C had received an unsatisfactory level of customer service and that no bills had been issued.

As a gesture of goodwill, it offered to monitor C's account to ensure it was fully opened, update the information held on the account, apply a discount to C's gas and electricity bills and provide C with the opportunity to arrange a payment plan. The Ombudsman considered the supplier's offer to be reasonable. However, in addition, the supplier was required to provide written confirmation that C's gas and electricity accounts had been fully opened and updated, obtain meter readings so bills could be issued and contact C to identify whether Direct debit needed to be set up against each account.

## **10.0 Billing - Missing Payment**

### **10.1**

C received a payment reminder from the supplier. C contacted the supplier and provided proof of payment. The supplier agreed to trace the missing payment but failed to take any action and continued to pursue C for payment. C contacted the supplier several times, but the supplier passed the account to a debt collection agency. C wrote to the supplier, but did not receive a reply.

The Ombudsman considered the supplier's failure to locate the missing payment or respond to C's complaint to be reflective of a shortfall in customer service. The supplier was required to send a letter of apology, confirm C's credit rating had not been affected and that the account had been called from the debt collection agency.

## **10.2**

C complained that the supplier requested payment for the same amount several times after it had been paid. C complained and the supplier eventually found the payment, but not before further reminders was sent. The supplier apologised and offered a goodwill payment. This was considered adequate, but the Ombudsman required confirmation for C that their credit reference had not been adversely affected and an additional, but small goodwill payment as a contribution towards C's expenses.

## **13.0 Billing - Payment Method**

### **13.1**

C complained that the supplier failed to observe a change of Direct Debit by C. C complained that the supplier continued billing, sent bills to an old address and escalated the debt to threaten legal action and disconnection. The supplier stated the Direct Debit was cancelled by C's bank however; there was no evidence of this.

The Ombudsman decided that C had experienced poor customer service and that had the supplier responded to C's letters the issues could have been resolved sooner. The supplier was required to make an additional goodwill payment in recognition of the poor customer service and as a contribution towards C's costs.

## **26.0 Transfer - Incorrect Billing**

### **26.1**

C received an unexpectedly high electricity bill for the time of year. C contacted the supplier to query the charges and was advised the bill was incorrect and a new bill would be issued. C failed to receive a new bill. C contacted the supplier several times, but the issue remained unresolved and C continued to receive demands for payment. C paid the disputed charges, but remained unhappy that the supplier had failed to resolve the matter or issue a new bill.

The supplier confirmed C had been misadvised several times and the charges on the account were correct. It offered to apply a credit equal to the late payment charges C had incurred and apply a further credit as a gesture of goodwill.

The Ombudsman considered the misadvised C received and the supplier's failure to investigate C's complaint or check the account to be reflective of poor customer service. The supplier's offer to apply a credit equal to the late payment charges was considered to be appropriate. However, the supplier was required to increase the credit offered as a gesture of goodwill in consideration of the charges C had incurred trying to resolve the complaint, the delays C experienced and the inconvenience and worry the matter had

caused. The supplier was also required to send a letter of apology, explain how the charges on the account had been calculated and confirm C's credit rating had not been affected.