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## **1.0 Billing**

### **1.1**

C complained to the supplier about errors on their gas and electricity accounts, and a payment it had failed to take into consideration. The supplier acknowledged that some errors had been made surrounding the opening and closure of accounts, and the transfer of credits in such circumstances. However, it explained that the disputed payment had been applied, but to a different account to the one C expected. This was due to C placing an incorrect account reference on the back of their cheque payment. C continued to complain, with the supplier failing to respond to a number of letters or address the concerns raised.

In resolution the supplier was required to send a letter of apology for the billing errors made and poor customer service received, and make a goodwill credit to the gas account. It was also required to provide written confirmation that both the gas and electricity accounts had been closed, in addition to a full written breakdown of all accounts. In light of the confusion the supplier was also required to agree a payment plan with C, and ensure any adverse credit information was removed. C was advised that if they failed to make all required payments then the supplier would be entitled to follow normal collection procedures.

### **1.2**

The Supplier applied a credit to C's account in error and then retracted the credit. C actually had a debit balance on the account. It was found the Supplier also had the incorrect type of meter registered on its system. The Ombudsman concludes there was a shortfall in customer service on this case and an inadequate level of administration demonstrated.

The Supplier offered a payment plan and a reduction in the balance in goodwill. The Ombudsman considered this a reasonable settlement to the administration errors but required a further goodwill gesture and a formal letter of apology in recognition of the customer service issues raised.

### **1.3**

C complained to the supplier about the continued billing of their gas account, as this had been transferred to another provider some months earlier. Despite making a number of complaints by telephone and writing, C continued to receive a number of payment demands, as well as a disconnection notice. C complained about the conflicting advice received from the supplier, and asked the Ombudsman resolve this ongoing problem.

The supplier acknowledged that errors had been made but on review ensured the account was closed from the transfer date and proposed to clear the remaining balance as a goodwill gesture.

It was evident that the supplier had taken the necessary action in order to close the account, but it was concluded that such action had only been taken after avoidable delays and errors were made. In resolution the supplier was required to send a letter of apology, provide written confirmation that the account was closed with a nil balance, and make a further goodwill payment to C.

## **5.0 Billing - Inaccurate Invoices**

### **5.1**

C disputed bills with the Supplier after the meter was changed. C sent letters to the Supplier but remained dissatisfied with the bills and responses received. The Supplier said that it sent C an estimated bill as the meter reading was delayed. The Supplier said that after examination of the bills it was apparent that C had been charged in error. The Supplier proposed to send C an amended bill for the correct charge and to award a nominal goodwill payment.

The Ombudsman was concerned that C had received an incorrect bill and viewed this as a shortfall in customer service. The Ombudsman also noted that C had been misinformed by the Supplier. The Ombudsman required the Supplier to honour its offer to send C an amended bill and to award a nominal goodwill payment.

### **5.2**

C complained that the supplier billed incorrectly and did not address the complaint lodged. The supplier stated the issue lay with the new meter which was not logged on the accounting system on time. This led to greatly increased and incorrect billing. The supplier had delayed in responding to C's complaint, but when it did so it considered the matter resolved, with an apology and goodwill payment.

The Ombudsman considered the proposals from the supplier were appropriate for the billing errors, but an additional goodwill payment was required for the poor customer service. As the supplier had apologised in writing already, it was not required to do so again.

### **5.3**

The supplier incorrectly billed C. When C complained the supplier advised the matter would be rectified. Despite numerous contacts within the eight month period the matter was still not resolved. The supplier apologised and acknowledged its billing error and stated this was due to an internal system error. The supplier made a number of

proposals to resolve the case. The Ombudsman required the supplier to provide an apology for poor customer service levels and in recognition provide a goodwill payment. This took into account costs incurred by C; to obtain an up-to-date meter reading; to bill the account to the accurate meter reading to determine the correct balance; and offer a payment plan for any balance outstanding.

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

### **6.1**

C disputed bills with Supplier as all were estimated. C called the Supplier and sent letters of complaint but received no resolution. C paid all bills received. C requested a correct bill and compensation. Supplier said that it had amended the bills to show the correct readings.

The Ombudsman said that after review of the information provided it was clear that the Supplier had not amended the bills correctly and had in fact charged C twice for usage. The Ombudsman said that C had received poor customer service from the Supplier as it had failed to resolve the issue within an acceptable time frame. The Ombudsman required the Supplier to confirm the start meter reading and to contact C for an up to date reading. The Supplier should then provide C with an amended bill based on these readings. The Supplier was also required to award a nominal goodwill payment and send C a letter of apology.

## **7.0 Billing - Incorrect Account Details**

### **7.1**

C moved into a new property and contacted the Supplier to set up an account. The Supplier incorrectly recorded that C had a prepayment meter. C contacted the Supplier to complain, and it arranged for an engineer to visit the property. The engineer confirmed C had a credit meter, but the Supplier did not update its records. C continued to complain, but no action was taken and C was unable to make any payments for the fuel that had been used. Following further contact from C, the Supplier confirmed the account had been amended and amended statement would be issued. C did not receive the revised bills, or any further contact from the Supplier.

The administrative error made when the account was set up, and the Supplier's delay in amending the account were considered to be reflective of a shortfall in customer service. The steps the Supplier had taken to resolve the matter were noted, but there was no evidence C had received the promised bills or had any further contact from it. In consideration of this, and the previous customer service issues, the Supplier was required to confirm the account had been updated, send a correct bill, apply a credit as a

gesture of goodwill and provide C with the opportunity to arrange a payment plan and set up a Direct Debit on the account.

## **10.0 Billing - Missing Payment**

### **10.1**

C complained that three different account numbers had been used on gas and electricity accounts over a short period of time. This was accepted by the supplier which explained that its billing system had been upgraded and that this caused new account numbers to be shown. This was accepted. C also complained that not all Direct Debit payments had been credited to the accounts. The supplier was satisfied that they had but it was felt that C should have the opportunity to check this with the supplier. Letters had been sent by C that were not responded to but it was found that account numbers were not shown on them. It was recommended that account numbers are always shown in the header as the supplier's cannot necessarily tie a letter to a case using only an address. There were instances where a call back had not been made and this was considered poor customer service.

the supplier was required to provide a letter of apology in respect of the poor customer service experienced, provide the contact details of a representative of the supplier who would take ownership of the matter. This person was to then contact C to discuss the accounts and the payments made. This person was to have all relevant information in relation to the payments made on the accounts since prior to the bill system changes until the present in order that these can be compared with C's records. If any anomaly was discovered after discussion (and if necessary the provision of support for the claimed payments) the payment history was to be rectified. the supplier was also to provide a goodwill gesture in recognition of the poor customer service experienced. This is to be provided in the form of a credit.

## **11.0 Billing - No Bill Received**

### **11.1**

C transferred to the Supplier but did not receive a bill. C complained and the Supplier agreed to investigate the matter, but did not take any action. After further contacts from C, the Supplier found C's previous supplier had closed C's account as if it had never supplied C, so transfer meter readings could not be provided. The Supplier took steps to obtain missing data flow information from a third party, but there were delays in the provision of the information. Without the data flows, the Supplier was unable to open an account for C.

The Supplier's lack of response to C's initial contact was considered to be reflective of poor customer care. The Supplier confirmed that although the matter had now been escalated, it was unable to provide a timescale for resolution. It was acknowledged that the Supplier required the data flow information to open an account, but the delays C had experienced were deemed unsatisfactory. It was also noted that the Supplier had not put any interim procedures in place to manage the situation. The Supplier had already agreed that it would not charge C for usage for a period of time after the date the supply transferred to it. This action was considered to be reasonable. It was noted the Supplier had also sent a gift to C as a gesture of goodwill. However, the Supplier was required to provide C with regular updates about progress regarding the opening of the account, obtain a meter reading, issue a bill and provide C with the opportunity to arrange a payment plan when the account was opened. The Supplier was also required to provide C with an estimate of usage and charges to date.

## **21.0 Transfer**

### **21.1**

C complained that the supplier applied late charges after transferring accounts. the supplier stated that meter readings were not provided when C stated they were. This led to arrears from the previous supplier. The supplier offered a goodwill payment, but C rejected this as inadequate.

The Ombudsman considered there had been delay in dealing with C's problem, but C could have raised the issue sooner; the goodwill payment already made was appropriate. No further action was recommended.