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1.0 Billing

1.1

C complained to the supplier about the charges on the electricity account. The supplier reviewed that matter and provided a larger bill due to the opening readings being estimated.

It was evident that a number of errors had been made by the supplier, and that a recalculation of the bill was required. It was concluded that C's opening readings should be accepted and that a new up to date reading was made. As the billing of the account was further complicated by the fact that C's usage was being charged on a single rate tariff, and that C had an economy system without this fact ever being taken into consideration a recalculation of the account was required.

In resolution the supplier was required to send a letter of apology, make arrangements to visit the property to take an accurate reading and ensure C's night switch was put back on, recalculate the account from the opening readings and those provided from the visit. The supplier was then required to recalculate the bill on the basis that C was using the economy system with the night switch on throughout, make a further goodwill credit to the account, agree a payment plan to clear the outstanding balance.

1.2

C disputed the payments put into key meter with the Supplier. After ten weeks C transferred service to another supplier as C received no resolution or assistance. C said that on calling the Supplier C was advised that a large credit would be refunded to C. C had not received this from the Supplier and so referred the complaint to the Ombudsman. The Supplier said that C had paid the amount C was claiming as a refund but that in error C's electricity consumption had not been deducted. On calculating C's consumption the Supplier said that C still owed money.

The Ombudsman was concerned that the Supplier failed to resolve C's complaint within a timely manner. The Ombudsman was also concerned with the poor customer service received. In recognition of this the ombudsman required the Supplier to remove the outstanding balance as goodwill and send C a letter of apology.

1.3

C was advised there was an outstanding balance on their account and C disputed this. The Supplier confirmed the balance was incorrect. C received a further bill and the Supplier agreed this was also incorrect. C experienced a poor level of customer service. The Supplier offered to refund payments made by C and clear the outstanding balance.

The Ombudsman was concerned that the Supplier had incorrectly advised C on their bill on more than one occasion. It was without doubt that a shortfall in customer service had occurred. The Supplier was required to fulfill its offer but was also required to make a goodwill payment and write a letter of apology.

5.0 Billing - Inaccurate Invoices

5.1

C complained that the supplier did not provide a refund for a gas account relating to C's relative. Despite a number of contacts the supplier did not take any action. The supplier stated that it had now issued the appropriate refund.

The Ombudsman required the supplier to provide C with an apology for poor customer service levels and stress and in recognition provide goodwill payment of via cheque. The Ombudsman recommended that the supplier handled cases of this nature with sensitivity and aimed to resolve issues within a timely manner.

5.2

C complained that the supplier failed to send a bill for several months. When it did a service was omitted. C complained but the supplier failed to respond fully. C requested a proper bill and time to pay it. The supplier investigated the complaint made to the Ombudsman and acknowledged the accounts had not been set up properly. It then processed a correct bill and sent it to C.

The Ombudsman considered C had experienced poor customer service for which an apology and a goodwill payment were required. The supplier was also recommended to arrange an offer of a payment plan as requested by C.

5.3

C complained that after a new meter was installed the service was more expensive. C said that the Supplier had also put C on the wrong tariff. C sent letters to the Supplier and made numerous calls of complaint but received no resolution. The Supplier proposed to investigate further and provide accurate bills to C.

The Ombudsman said it was clear from the evidence provided that the Supplier had failed to resolve the complaint within an acceptable time frame. The Supplier had also provided C with poor customer service. The Supplier was required to investigate the meter and tariff further, bill C correctly, refund C with any overpayment, award a nominal goodwill payment and send a letter of apology.

5.4

C complained that the Supplier added a charge when a change was completed to their account. The Supplier investigated and justified the charge, but conceded that it was not well explained to C. It offered to reduce the outstanding balance.

The Ombudsman considered the offer by the Supplier was appropriate; it was required to complete the offer and make an apology for the poor explanation given to C previously.

5.5

C complained that the supplier sent a bill for arrears unexpectedly. C complained that no increase to payments had previously been requested. C complained, but got no answer. C then requested a code of practice and got a totally inappropriate response.

The Ombudsman agreed with C that there had been poor customer service and the supplier was required to make a full written apology and provide a goodwill payment. The payment rate that C had suggested was also commended to the supplier, pending a further review in the winter months.

5.6

C complained that the supplier has incorrectly billed them and complained. the supplier stated initially that the problem lay with the new supplier and took three reviews and an investigation of the account before it found that its initial recalculation was wrong and that C had been on the wrong tariff. The supplier offered a goodwill payment in recognition of this.

The Ombudsman required an apology, but considered the goodwill gesture to have been appropriate. An apology was also required for a shortfall in customer service.

6.0 Billing - Inaccurate Meter Reading

6.1

C transferred to the Supplier. The Supplier received meter information from a third party, which incorrectly showed C, had a prepayment meter. C told the Supplier the meter information it held was incorrect, but it did not take any action and C received incorrect bills and correspondence. C contacted the Supplier numerous times and it eventually arranged a site visit. The visit confirmed C had a credit meter. However, there was a delay in the Supplier receiving the results of the site visit from the Data Collector, and C's account was not updated.

It was noted that the Supplier could not be held responsible for the incorrect metering information sent to it. However, its delay in investigating the matter and responding to C's concerns was deemed to be reflective of unsatisfactory customer care. It was acknowledged that the Supplier had now taken steps to manually amend C's account and applied a credit as a gesture of goodwill. However, C had still not received a bill and the Supplier had still not obtained the results of the site visit.

The Supplier was required to apply a further credit as a gesture of goodwill, update C's account with the correct tariff information and issue a correct bill, and ensure any payments C had made to the account were correctly recorded when the account was updated.

7.0 Billing - Incorrect Account Details

7.1

C contacted the supplier to request an up to date bill. the supplier sent the bill, but C disputed the meter readings. C confirmed the meter was a two rate meter, not a one rate meter, as shown on the supplier's records. the supplier arranged an appointment to visit C's property to investigate, but failed to keep the appointment. C requested a bill to reflect the charges against a two rate meter, but the supplier issued two incorrect bills.

the supplier's failure to investigate C's complaint, update its records and issue accurate bills was considered to be reflective of poor customer service. It was also unclear if C's electricity charges had been calculated at the correct rate. the supplier was required to arrange to visit C's property, obtain accurate meter readings and check the meter was set to the correct rate. It was also required to issue an accurate bill once it had completed the visit and apply a credit as a gesture of goodwill.

9.0 Billing - Mis-Information

9.1

C registered for an online fuel account, but did not provide a valid e-mail address. When the Supplier noticed the absence of an e-mail address, it contacted C to explain the account would be closed and paper bills would be issued. The Supplier also took a meter reading and issued a bill which showed C's Direct Debit payments had not been sufficient to meet the fuel charges. The Supplier proposed an increase to the Direct Debit payments. C disputed the increase in the payments and considered the Supplier had provided misinformation.

It was considered C had a responsibility to read the terms and conditions of the price plan before agreeing to the service and to provide an e-mail address. However, the Supplier's delay in identifying the absence of an e-mail address was considered to be

reflective of a shortfall in customer service. It was also noted that it had not replied to all of C's correspondence. The Supplier was required to provide C with the opportunity to arrange a payment plan and apply a credit as a gesture of goodwill.

25.0 Transfer - Incorrect Action Taken

25.1

C transferred to the Supplier for electricity. The supply was incorrectly connected to a disconnected meter at C's property, so C continued to be billed by the previous Supplier. C contacted the new Supplier and it agreed to rectify the matter, but failed to take any action. However, it sent bills and payment demands to C for electricity supplied to both the disconnected meter and C's current meter, which was still supplied by C's previous Supplier.

C complained numerous times by telephone and in writing, but the Supplier failed to respond and C continued to receive demands for payment and notification that the supply would be disconnected.

The Supplier confirmed it had failed to close one of the accounts and respond to C's letters of complaint. The Ombudsman considered it had not taken reasonable steps to resolve the complaint and that C had received an unsatisfactory level of customer service. The Supplier was required to make a payment as a gesture of goodwill, send a letter of apology and confirm both accounts had been closed with a nil balance. It was also required to confirm C's credit rating had not been affected and provide C with an explanation for the delay in closing the second account.

26.0 Transfer - Incorrect Billing

26.1

C contacted the supplier due to the bill being high. Although the supplier arranged an appointment this did not happen. C continued to receive bills from the supplier. Despite C writing to C twice about the high bills and asking for the meter to be tested the supplier did not provide a response. the supplier maintained the charges since electricity had been used. However, the supplier admitted that it should have arranged for a meter accuracy test sooner. the supplier advised that the high usage was found to be due to an appliance being left on constantly.

The Ombudsman accepted that it was C's and the landlord's responsibility to have checked the appliance, but considered the supplier should have intervened sooner as this could have prevented the high charges from building up. Furthermore, the supplier should have arranged for a meter accuracy test sooner since this had been requested by C over telephone and twice in writing. The Ombudsman required the supplier to provide

an apology for poor customer service levels; to reduce the outstanding balance by 50% as a goodwill gesture; to provide a payment for failure to meet Guaranteed Standards; to offer a payment plan, taking into account C's ability to pay, so that the outstanding balance on the account could be paid off.

26.2

C disputed final bill with the Supplier. C called on numerous occasions and also sent a letter of complaint. The Supplier called C and advised that a response would be given within four to seven weeks. C still received no response or amended bill. The Supplier said that it had been provided with an incorrect meter reading. It did not have the correct reading and confirmed that C's final bill had been amended to reflect this.

The Ombudsman said that it was clear that C had received poor customer service. The Supplier delayed resolving the complaint by seven months and this was viewed as unacceptable. The Ombudsman required the Supplier to send C the amended bill but to credit the outstanding balance with a goodwill payment. The account credit remaining should then be sent to C by cheque. The Supplier was also required to send a letter of apology.