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1.0 Billing

1.1

C agreed a price plan for electric and gas with Supplier. The gas was charged at the correct tariff but the Supplier did not apply the correct tariff to the electricity account, despite letters from C.

The Ombudsman required that the SP make a goodwill payment and written apology to C for the inconvenience caused. It also required that the Supplier apply the price protection 2010 tariff back to the agreed date and send C a cheque for the credit balance.

1.2

The Supplier failed to close C's previous account correctly and it transferred to another Supplier in error. The Supplier then continued to charge C for services no longer provided and due to non payment the account was passed for recovery action. The Supplier failed to administer the account correctly and an error was made when recording C's new contact details. The Supplier sent all relevant correspondence to an incorrect address.

The Ombudsman concludes the Supplier failed to provide an adequate level of customer service and administration of this account. In summary she requires the Supplier to ensure the account in dispute is closed with a nil balance; withdraw the outstanding balance; make a goodwill gesture by cheque; and to issue a formal letter of apology including an assurance C's credit history has not been adversely affected by its actions relating to this complaint.

1.3

C's meter was changed from a prepayment meter to a credit meter. Supplier did not update its records and C did not pay for any electricity for over a year. C had attempted to set up a Direct Debit so believed payment was being taken. However, supplier did not set up the Direct Debit.

After C had complained supplier offered a goodwill credit but C was unwilling to accept and the case reached deadlock.

The Ombudsman was of the opinion that that the outstanding balance was correct and the Supplier's offer was fair and reasonable. The Ombudsman required Supplier to maintain its offer, send a letter of apology and offer C a payment plan.

1.4

C was billed using estimated readings for two years. C's Direct Debit was not increased during the period despite Supplier's estimated bills showing an increasing debt. When an actual reading was used a large outstanding balance was produced. When C complained Supplier credited the outstanding balance and offered a payment plan as a goodwill gesture.

The Ombudsman was of the opinion that there was a shortfall in customer service in this case but considered the Supplier's offer fair and reasonable and required it to maintain its offer.

1.5

Supplier did not update a meter exchange on its systems which led to some confusion with C's account. A bill showing a large credit was produced as C provided an accurate reading from the meter (installed at 0000) but supplier saw this as a continuation of the readings from the old meter, which started at a reading significantly higher than 0000.

When a final bill was produced there was a small debit balance. C complained under the impression that C would be due a significant credit. Supplier tried to give explanations to C but he was not satisfied. As it turned out, the final bill was inaccurate but this was in C's favour.

The Ombudsman was of the opinion that the final bill was correct but there had been some customer service shortfalls. The Ombudsman required Supplier to make a goodwill payment to C and send a formal letter of apology.

1.6

C moved into a new house and registered with the Supplier, but did not receive any bills. C complained, but there was a long delay before a bill was issued. When it arrived C disputed the charges. C stated the Supplier agreed to reduce the balance. C began to repay the balance and C's credit meter was eventually exchanged for a pre payment meter. C considered the payments made exceeded the debt amount and requested a refund. The Supplier disagreed and stated an outstanding balance still remained.

There was insufficient evidence to establish if the Supplier had agreed to reduce C's initial bill. The account information also showed that prior to the installation of a pre payment meter, C's payments were insufficient to meet charges for the fuel used; therefore the outstanding balance of the account had increased. There was no evidence C had repaid the balance. However, it was noted the Supplier had not applied the full amount of the due balance to the pre payment meter when it was installed, and had subsequently added the shortfall to the balance some time later. There was no evidence the Supplier had notified C of this, and the Supplier's error, and its failure to contact C were considered to be reflective of a shortfall in customer care. The Supplier was required to apply a credit as a gesture of goodwill.

1.7

C received inaccurate invoices and complained to SP. SP offered a resolution before investigation by the Ombudsman.

6.0 Billing - Inaccurate Meter Reading

6.1

C received a large bill from the Supplier which C disputed. C requested to only pay so much of the debt over 12 months. The Supplier confirmed that in error C had been charged for gas usage via a four dial meter when in fact C had a five dial meter. The Supplier proposed to remove all debt older than two years and had already credited the balance with some goodwill.

The Ombudsman was concerned that the Supplier continued to bill C incorrectly for such a long period of time and could not help but note that the error was caused by the Supplier. The Ombudsman however was of the opinion that the proposal to remove all debt older than two years and the account credit were viewed as a reasonable award in recognition of the billing problem. The Ombudsman required the Supplier to ensure that account was credited with the relevant refunds, award a further nominal goodwill payment, arrange a suitable payment plan and send a letter of apology.