

# WATRS

## Water Redress Scheme

### ADJUDICATOR'S FINAL DECISION SUMMARY

**Adjudication Reference:** WAT-X320

**Date of Decision:** 27/05/2021

#### Party Details

**Customer:** The Customer

**Company:** X Company

#### Complaint

The customer claims that the company continues to overcharge for her metered water supply, and once this issue was raised, the company then provided poor customer service. The customer is seeking the company to adjust its charges to reflect her actual usage and pay £2,500.00 compensation for the distress and inconvenience.

#### Response

The company says the customer is being billed correctly on a fixed charge in accordance with the company's WaterSupport scheme. The correct meter is supplying the customer's property, and the company has found no evidence to suggest the supply is shared with any of her neighbours. The company has contacted the customer to try to agree on a date and time to re-visit to do further checks and confirms that the customer does have the option of having the meter tested by a third party if she still feels it reads incorrectly. The company has not made any further offers of settlement.

#### Findings

I am satisfied that the evidence shows that the company did not fail to provide its services to the customer to the standard to be reasonably expected concerning its charges. Furthermore, I am satisfied there have been no failings concerning customer service for which the customer has not already been adequately compensated.

#### Outcome

The company needs to take no further action.

The customer must reply by 25/06/2021 to accept or reject this decision.



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## Case Outline

### **The customer's complaint is that:**

• The company continues to overcharge for her metered water supply, and once this issue was raised, the company then provided poor customer service. • The customer is seeking the company to adjust its charges to reflect her actual usage and pay £2,500.00 compensation for the distress and inconvenience incurred.

### **The company's response is that:**

• The customer is being billed correctly on a fixed charge in accordance with the company's WaterSupport scheme. • The correct meter is supplying the customer's property, and the company has found no evidence to suggest the supply is shared with any of her neighbours. • The company has contacted the customer to try to agree on a date and time to re-visit to do further checks and confirms that the customer does have the option of having the meter tested by a third party if she still feels it reads incorrectly. • To reduce her charges, the customer can also apply to be billed on a metered basis or have the supply disconnected. The company will do this free of charge. However, if a connection is needed in the future, the customer will need to apply and pay for a new supply.

## How is a WATRS decision reached?

In reaching my decision, I have considered two key issues. These are:

- Whether the company failed to provide its services to the customer to the standard to be reasonably expected by the average person.
- Whether or not the customer has suffered any financial loss or other disadvantage as a result of a failing by the company.

In order for the customer's claim against the company to succeed, the evidence available to the adjudicator must show on a balance of probabilities that the company has failed to provide its services to the standard one would reasonably expect and that as a result of this failure the customer has suffered some loss or detriment. If no such failure or loss is shown, the company will not be liable.

I have carefully considered all of the evidence provided. If I have not referred to a particular document or matter specifically, this does not mean that I have not considered it in reaching my decision.

## How was this decision reached?

1. The dispute centres on whether the customer is being correctly charged on her metered water supply.
2. The company must meet the standards set out in OFWAT's Charges Scheme Rules, the Water Supply and Sewerage Services (Customer Service Standards) Regulations 2008 and the Water Industry Act 1991.
3. The company also has certain obligations regarding its customer services as set out in the OFWAT Guaranteed Standards Scheme and the company's own Guarantee Standards Scheme (GSS).
4. From the evidence put forward by the customer and the company, I understand the customer contacted the company in October 2020 to query her charges after an increase in her payment plan. On 4 November 2020, the company attended the customer's property and confirmed the correct meter is supplying her property and found no evidence to suggest the supply is shared with her neighbours. I understand that the company provided the customer with the job notes of this visit and other information, including the location of her data logger and a statement of account which included the actual meter readings.
5. I understand that the customer was unhappy with the way previous calls were handled and the customer service she received. As a result, the company agreed as a gesture of goodwill to cancel the outstanding charges on her account of £165.03. The company's notes in its response state that the customer was happy with this outcome; although there is no record of the call, there are notes on the account that reflect the conversation with the customer.
6. Further discussion took place between the parties, in which the company agreed that they arranged hourly meter readings and asked the customer to keep a diary of her water usage. The evidence shows that the company's investigations have shown no sign of any issues with the customer's meter, and its initial checks suggest the meter is not registering water from more than one property. I understand that the customer disputed the company's findings, and the company advised the customer that the difference in results could be down to a previously leaking toilet. The customer disputed this, and on 11 March 2021, commenced the WATRS adjudication process.
7. Concerning the customer's comments that she is being overcharged for her metered water charge, the evidence shows that since October 2020, the customer has been billed on the fixed WaterSupport tariff, which caps her bills at £408.00 for the year 2020/21 and £418.92 for 2021/2022.

8. I understand that the WaterSupport scheme is available for customers who have a low household income and a water bill of more than £430 per year. The evidence shows that following the contact from the customer in October 2020, the company identified that the customer would benefit from the WaterSupport scheme and implemented it for the customer.

9. I understand that the meter serving the customer's property had a serial number of (REDACTED) and was brand new when fitted in 2019. At the same time the meter was fitted, an automated meter reading device was also fitted, which allows the company to log on a monthly or hourly basis the meter's reading. However, after a careful review of both the meter logs provided and the customer's water diary, they seem to show a discrepancy. However, as neither party has provided a copy of the whole records, I find I am unable to determine with any certainty whether a discrepancy truly exists and, if so, whether this could be related to leaks within the customer's own private pipework as suggested by the company.

10. However, the evidence shows that the company's investigations have shown no sign of any issues with the customer's meter, and its initial checks suggest the meter is not registering water from more than one property. The evidence shows that if the customer still feels the meter reads incorrectly, the company has offered the customer the options to re-visit her property to do further checks and have the meter tested by a third party to confirm its accuracy. I note that there would be a charge of £84.00 for the meter to be tested by a third party. However, if the meter is faulty, the company would refund the customer the £84.00 charge. I am satisfied that one or both options are the best way for the customer to confirm her charges if she still feels the meter reads incorrectly.

11. Considering the above, I find that it has not been proven that the company failed to provide its services to the customer to the standard to be reasonably expected by the average person concerning its charges.

12. The company has certain obligations in respect of its customer services. From the evidence provided, I am satisfied that the company accepts it provided poor service in this respect. This poor service is explained within the company's response. After careful consideration of all the evidence put forward by both parties, I find the goodwill cancellation of the outstanding charges of £165.03 on the customer's account is appropriate compensation for the failings regarding the way previous calls were handled and the customer service received.

13. Considering the above, I find the customer has not proven the company failed to provide its services to the customer to the standard to be reasonably expected by the average person concerning its charges, nor has the customer proved the

company failed to provide services to the standard to be reasonably expected when investigating these issues. Furthermore, I am satisfied there have been no failings concerning customer service for which the customer has not already been paid adequate compensation, as the company has provided a good level of service at all other times throughout its dialogue with the customer.

### **Outcome**

1. The company needs to take no further action.

### **What happens next?**

This adjudication decision is final and cannot be appealed or amended.

The customer must reply within 20 working days to accept or reject this final decision.

When you tell WATRS that you accept or reject the decision, the company will be notified of this. The case will then be closed.

If you do not tell WATRS that you accept or reject the decision, this will be taken to be a rejection of the decision.

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**Mark Ledger**  
**Adjudicator**