

WATRS

Water Redress Scheme

ADJUDICATOR'S FINAL DECISION SUMMARY

Adjudication Reference: WAT-X901

Date of Final Decision: 23 April 2022

Party Details

Customer: The Customer

Company: The Company

Complaint

The customer says the company did not advise her of its Water Help scheme or to get a water meter fitted when she sought support in 2017. She has since benefitted from the scheme and had a water meter fitted. She now wants the company to backdate her charges based on her recent metered charges.

Response

The company says it gave the customer information about its Water Help scheme and water metering on bills and in correspondence. Therefore she could have applied for these if she wished. It has no record of the customer seeking support in 2017. It therefore denies the claim.

Findings

The evidence does not show the company failed to provide its services to the standard to be reasonably expected.

Outcome

The company does not need to take any further action.

The customer must reply by 24 May 2022 to accept or reject this decision.

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Case Outline

The customer's complaint is that:

- She moved into her property in 2017 and shortly after phoned the company to ask for financial assistance.
- The company said it could not offer any help and continued to bill her based on the rateable value of the property.
- However, she believes the company should have told her about its Water Help scheme and offered to fit a water meter.
- She has since had a water meter fitted and benefitted from the Water Help scheme.
- She now seeks that the company backdate her charges to metered charges.
- In comments on the company's response the customer maintains the company should have offered assistance in 2017 but failed to do so. She also raises new complaints about the company's service.
- The customer made no comments on a preliminary decision.

The company's response is that:

- It has provided copies of bills sent to the customer from 2017 when it opened her account. The bills provide information about financial support and how to apply for a water meter. Information about water metering was also within a welcome letter sent to the customer.
- In 2021 the customer called to ask how she could save money on her bills and it sent her a Water Help application form. It also explained how installing a water meter could help save her money.
- The customer applied for its Water Help scheme however it found she did not meet the criteria. This was because it looked at earnings over the last 12 months and over that time the customer earned above its threshold, even though more recently she had lost her job and income.

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- Following a review and noting its scheme criteria were due to change in April 2021 upon which the customer would be accepted, it decided to accept her application backdated to the date she first applied.
- It installed a water meter in June 2021.
- In February 2022 the customer complained the company should have fitted a water meter when she asked for help in 2017. However, it no longer held a recording of that call and its case records did not show she asked for financial support. Had she done so it would have provided the correct advice.
- It notes its customer service team erred on the side of accepting the customer's position and offered an apology for not offering advice in 2017. However, there is no evidence that this was the case. It therefore denies the claim.

How is a WATRS decision reached?

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

1. Whether the company failed to provide its services to the customer to the standard to be reasonably expected by the average person.
2. 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.

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How was this decision reached?

1. The bills and correspondence provided by the company evidence it gave the customer information about the Water Help scheme and water metering upon opening her account and on bills thereafter. I am therefore satisfied the company made reasonable efforts to ensure the customer was aware of these options.
2. I acknowledge the customer insists she asked the company for financial support during a phone call in 2017 and that it told her it could not help. I am also mindful the company's case records do not support that such a discussion took place.
3. I have to consider and weigh the evidence available and reach a decision as to what happened on the balance of probabilities. In this case I have to weigh the customer's recollection against the company's written records. While I appreciate the company's records are brief, I do attach more weight to them as they were made at the time. Taking this into account, the evidence does not show the company gave incorrect advice in 2017.
4. In light of the above I am unable to find the company failed to provide its services to the standard to be reasonably expected and therefore the customer's claim is unable to succeed.
5. I appreciate the customer will be disappointed with this outcome. However, even if I were to accept the call took place as she outlined, it remains that the company provided written information about the support available. It was therefore open to the customer to act on this if she wished, but there is no evidence she did so until recently.
6. In accordance with WATRS rule 5.4.3 I cannot consider any new matters raised in the customer's comments to the company's response. I therefore have no comments on the further complaints raised.

Outcome

The company does not need to take any further action.

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What happens next?

- This adjudication decision is final and cannot be appealed or amended.
- The customer must reply by 24 May 2022 to accept or reject this 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.



J Mensa-Bonsu LLB (Hons) PgDL (BVC)
Adjudicator

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