

SPSO decision report



Case: 201904053, Scottish Government
Sector: Scottish Government and Devolved Administration
Subject: Policy / administration
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

C complained the Scottish Government had repeatedly failed to provide them with accurate information about agricultural grants that they were entitled to apply for. C said they had repeatedly visited the local office without receiving accurate information. C had complained about their experience but they had not received a response for a year. C said the Scottish Government response would not have been issued had they not repeatedly chased it up.

We found that there was very little evidence of the Scottish Government's complaint investigation. It was a matter of fact that C was responsible as the business owner for confirming that they had applied for all the entitlements they were eligible for. There was no evidence C had done this. In addition, for some of the years, C said they were poorly advised, the application had to be completed online, and C could not have been assisted with a paper application. We found the Scottish Government were not responsible for ensuring C applied for the correct entitlements. Therefore, we did not uphold this aspect of C's complaint.

The Scottish Government's response to C's complaint had, however, fallen below a reasonable standard. Appropriate records had not been kept and there was no evidence the Scottish Government had followed their complaint handling procedure. We upheld this complaint, and asked the Scottish Government to continue to provide evidence they were monitoring their complaints effectively and were able to identify delays. The Scottish Government were able to provide evidence showing the steps they had subsequently taken to improve their complaint handling.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for the failure to investigate their complaint in line with the Scottish Government's procedures. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- Accurate and comprehensive records of complaints investigations need to be kept.

We have asked the organisation to provide us with evidence that they have implemented the recommendations we have made on this case by the deadline we set.