

SPSO decision report



Case: 202400810, Social Security Scotland
Sector: Scottish Government and Devolved Administration
Subject: Handling of application
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

C complained about the service that they received from Social Security Scotland (SSS) in relation to a backdated disability payment. C accidentally gave the incorrect bank account number and the payment was paid into the incorrect bank account. While C contacted SSS to inform them that they had not received the payment, SSS did not action C's concerns and despite C's attempts to contact SSS, they did not receive a response.

We found that SSS provided incorrect information to C about the backdated payment process and reassured C that the money would, ultimately be returned to them. We also found that they failed to check the full account number when C alerted SSS of the missing payment, that they failed to follow guidance, that they failed to return C's calls and provided an unreasonable level of service and that they unreasonably delayed starting the payment trace (although an earlier trace would not have guaranteed that the payment be returned). We upheld this complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for the failing identified. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsos.org.uk/meaningful-apologies.

What we said should change to put things right in future:

- Where it is identified that a payment trace should be carried out, this should be done promptly.
- The SSS should provide correct information to clients.
- The SSS should check the full account number if a concern is raised that a payment has been issued to the wrong account.
- When a client requires a call back, that there is an internal agreement for who will contact the client and that this is actioned without unreasonable delay.
- When a payment is not received, SSS should have clear, robust procedures with version control to ensure it is clear, what procedures are available at any time.

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.