

**Case:** 201003180, Glasgow City Council  
**Sector:** local government  
**Subject:** housing benefit and council tax benefit  
**Outcome:** some upheld, action taken by body to remedy, recommendations

### Summary

Mr C complained about the way that the council processed his claim for housing and council tax benefits. Mr C said that they discriminated against him by asking him to provide a written valuation (costing £150) of a property he owned, which was on the UK mainland. He said that councils elsewhere in the UK obtain valuation information themselves, without the applicant having to pay. Mr C also complained that the council inappropriately referred payment arrears to a debt collecting agency and failed to handle his complaint in an effective and reasonable way.

The council acknowledged that there had been unnecessary delays in the handling of Mr C's benefit claim due to it being administered incorrectly. The council had issued Mr C with the wrong claim form and did not ask him for all the information to support his claim at the one time or in a timely manner. They also acknowledged that Mr C's benefit had not been cancelled immediately when he told them that his wife had started full time employment. They explained that they had asked Mr C to obtain a valuation as District Valuer Services (a division of the Valuation Agency Office) do not provide valuations for properties outside mainland UK.

We upheld the complaint about the processing of Mr C's benefit claims. We found evidence that the problems arose because individual members of staff did not properly assess the information they had or take the correct action based on it, but we found that the council had taken action to resolve this. They had also apologised for incorrectly processing Mr C's claims and did not seek to recover the overpaid benefit. Our investigation also found that the council followed the correct procedure when asking Mr C to provide written evidence showing the current value of his property. However, we made a recommendation about how they might handle such cases in future.

We did not uphold Mr C's other complaints. We found that the council had correctly followed their procedures in referring Mr C's council tax arrears to a debt collecting agency. We also noted that although the council had not responded to all of the issues Mr C raised in his complaint in the early stages of the complaints procedure, they had provided him with a full response at the final stage of the process.

### **Recommendation**

We recommended that the council:

- consider reviewing how they handle cases where a claimant is unable to provide written evidence of the value of a property that falls outside the remit of the District Valuer Services.