

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201403458, Glasgow City Council  
**Sector:** local government  
**Subject:** employment grants/business development grants and loans  
**Outcome:** some upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mr C complained about the service he received from Business Gateway in relation to applications for grants for his new business. He said that he was encouraged to apply for grants but, when his applications were unsuccessful, staff did not respond reasonably to his requests for further information and assistance. When he complained about the service, he said that the council had handled his complaint poorly, and outside the appropriate response timescales.

We noted a lack of contemporary evidence on what was discussed at some of Mr C's meetings with Business Gateway. However, we did not find any evidence that Mr C had been given inaccurate information, though we did note that more detailed information could have been made available about the eligibility criteria for grants. We identified issues with the way that staff informed Mr C of the outcome of his applications, and how clear this information was. His applications had not been successful, but this was not clear from the emails Mr C initially received after a panel considered his applications.

When Mr C complained to the council, they did not initially handle his correspondence as a complaint. We agreed with Mr C that the council were inappropriately applying the timescales in their complaints handling procedure, by taking the day they received a complaint as 'day 0' rather than 'day 1'. Mr C also made a claim for compensation, which he complained had not be appropriately considered. While we found that there was no evidence that the council's legal department had appropriately considered this claim, we explained that it is not our role to assess claims for compensation.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- consider reviewing the information on grant applications to provide more detail in relation to the definitions of ineligibility criteria;
- consider revising their customer service standards leaflet to explain what may happen if an applicant is initially unsuccessful with their grant application, in terms of being provided with the opportunity to provide additional supporting information;
- remind all relevant staff of the importance of handling complaints in line with the complaints handling procedure and the importance of providing a full response to the issues raised;
- provide a full response to Mr C in relation to his claim for compensation; and
- apologise to Mr C for the failings identified.