

SPSO decision report

Case: 201707587, Scottish Government D-G Learning & Justice
Sector: Scottish Government and devolved administration
Subject: complaints handling
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained that the Scottish Government failed to respond to her complaint within a reasonable timeframe. Ms C came to us after waiting a number of months for a response to her complaint. We contacted the Scottish Government five times over the course of four months to request an update on Ms C's complaint. When they failed to provide Ms C with a response within the timeframe we set, we accepted a complaint from Ms C about the Scottish Government's handling of her complaint.

During the course of our investigation, the Scottish Government replied to Ms C's complaint. We found that they had failed to refer Ms C to us at the the end of their complaints process and failed to provide us with information we requested by the deadline set. We considered that the Scottish Government failed to respond to Ms C's complaint within a reasonable timeframe and upheld her complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Ms C for failing to respond to her complaint within a reasonable timeframe, keep her updated about delays and refer her to our office at the end of the complaints procedure. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at <https://www.spsso.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance>.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- The Scottish Government should follow their Complaints Handling Procedure. They should reflect on the poor handling of Ms C's complaint and set out what action they are taking to prevent similar errors occurring in future.
- The Scottish Government should reflect on the poor handling of our enquiries and set out what action they are taking to ensure more effective communication channels in future. Support can be found through the Complaints Standards Authority: <http://www.valuingcomplaints.org.uk/>.