

Department drops request for return of benefits overpayment

The complainant came to the Ombudsman after he was told in 2016 that he had been overpaid Income Support between April and July 2008. He added that he had been told by the Social Security Agency that they were unable to show how this overpayment had occurred because there were no records available.

He considered that it was unfair he was being asked to repay the money because of the 8 year delay, that there was no supporting evidence with the request, and that the length of time that had elapsed meant that he no longer had any right to appeal.

In response to the Ombudsman's enquiries and proposals, the Agency's sponsor department (the Department for Communities) agreed that it would not pursue the recovery of the debt. They also accepted that the request for repayment after a considerable period of time had caused the complainant undue stress and concern, and provided him with a written apology.