

The complaint

Ms C complains about Wescot Credit Services Limited trading as Wescot's actions when trying to recover two debts from her.

What happened

Ms C has told us she entered into a Debt Management Plan (DMP) in 2013 via an organisation that provides debt advice (C). Ms C says the DMP included two debts she had with a lender (S). In December 2018 S instructed Westcot to administer the payments Ms C was making towards the debts as part of her DMP.

The DMP ended last year but Westcot contacted Ms C to say there were outstanding balances on both accounts it was managing. Wescot said Ms C owed £439.13 on one account (ref ending 5966) and £379.67 on the other (ref ending 9426).

Ms C complained to Westcot as she thought her DMP had repaid the debts in question. Ms C asked Westcot to provide proof of the outstanding balances it was seeking to collect. Ms C also complained that Wescot hadn't been contacting her at the right address.

Westcot didn't uphold Ms C's complaint and said it hadn't provided the balances C was working from. Wescot confirmed the outstanding balances it gave were correct. Wescot also said Ms C hadn't updated her address with it or S so it wasn't aware she'd moved home. Wescot went on to advise that account ending 5966 had been returned to S to administer. Wescot apologised for the time it had taken to respond to Ms C's complaints and reduced the outstanding balance of account ending 9426 to £300.

Ms C referred her complaint to us and it was passed to an investigator. They thought Wescot had dealt with the complaint fairly and didn't ask it to do anything else. Ms C asked to appeal and said she had her mail forwarded for six months after she moved and that other businesses had been able to contact her. Ms C also said she'd agreed to repay the full balance of account ending 9426 but didn't hear back from Wescot. Ms C said she still hadn't been given proof of the outstanding balance for account ending 5966. As Ms C asked to appeal, her complaint has been passed to me to make a decision.

What I've decided – and why

I've considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what's fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint.

Ms C has told us she entered into a DMP via C in 2013 and moved in 2014. From the point Ms C entered the DMP, C forwarded her payments. The payments would've been made directly to S until December 2018 when Wescot was instructed to administer both debts. Westcot has advised that S was unaware Ms C had moved so it was given her old address. I know Ms C feels Westcot could've got her new address from C, but it had no reason to think she'd moved. The payments had been consistently made from 2013 to S and from December 2018 to Westcot. Given C was acting to administer the DMP on Ms C's behalf, I can't see why Wescot would've needed to write to her directly until payments were missed.

Once the payments stopped, Wescot tried to contact Ms C at the address provided by S. It was later able to trace Ms C to her new address and get in touch with her about the outstanding balances. I haven't found Wescot made errors with Ms C's address.

Ms C has explained she asked for evidence of the payments made and outstanding loan balances. I'll deal with each account in turn. I can see Wescot was able to provide a detailed statement for account ending 9426 that confirmed the outstanding balance of £379.67 it was seeking to collect was correct. Ms C has confirmed she is satisfied that figure is right and agreed to offer full repayment.

Wescot failed to quickly respond to Ms C, but has agreed to reduce the outstanding balance to £300 to recognise its delays. I'm satisfied that's a fair way to resolve this part of Ms C's complaint and reflects its delayed response. I leave it to Ms C to decide how to proceed.

Ms C says she hasn't been sent evidence to confirm the outstanding balance of account ending 5966 is correct. I appreciate Ms C doesn't feel confident the outstanding balance figure provided is right. But Wescot could only provide the evidence given to it by S, the lender. I can see account statements have been provided along with a list of all payments made via the DMP. But I agree the level of detail doesn't match the statement information for account ending 9426. I can see Ms C feels Wescot has failed to demonstrate the amount it says is outstanding is correct, but I'm satisfied it's provided all the available information.

Account ending 5966 has been returned to S, so Wescot is no longer involved with any debt collection in connection to it. I'm satisfied that Wescot sought to obtain as much information as possible from the debt owner and sent it to Ms C. I haven't been persuaded Wescot treated Ms C unfairly.

My final decision

My decision is that I don't uphold this complaint because Wescot Credit Services Limited trading as Wescot has already made an offer that is fair and reasonable in all the circumstances.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Ms C to accept or reject my decision before 18 January 2022.

Marco Manente
Ombudsman