

SPSO decision report

Case: 201200725, South Lanarkshire Council
Sector: local government
Subject: neighbour disputes and antisocial behaviour
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C and Ms C complained to us about how the council handled their complaints about their neighbours' antisocial behaviour (ASB). They said that their sleep was frequently disturbed and they were concerned for the safety of their family and property. They complained that the council had failed to investigate, had not responded to complaints within their published timescales and did not keep them informed about what action was being taken. Mr C and Ms C had also kept diary sheets with details of the disturbances that had been occurring, and they said that the council had failed to act on these.

We upheld Mr C and Ms C's complaint. Our investigation found that they had complained to the council over a nineteen-month period. The council had recorded or noted several incidents, and had taken action after the first few, but had then failed to follow up later complaints appropriately. We found that the council had only issued diary sheets once, and had not followed up when they did not receive completed copies. We also found that internal communication documents showed that the council were aware that the situation was deteriorating, but they took several months to achieve a satisfactory solution. The council also failed to appropriately record and respond to each complaint within their published timescales and, in particular, did not keep Mr C and Ms C informed of the outcome of their investigations or their decisions.

Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- ensure that staff are fully aware of the requirements in relation to the maintenance of records of complaints, interviews and communications in relation to ASB;
- ensure that staff fulfil the requirements of the council's procedure and guidance in relation to diary sheets;
- highlight to staff the impact of not responding to complaints of ASB within their published timescales; and
- apologise to Ms C and Mr C for the failings we identified and for the time taken in bringing this complaint to us.