

SPSO decision report

Case: 201202165, A Council
Sector: local government
Subject: adult, community and further education
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C's two children were educated at home. During the academic year 2011/2012, they both attended a course at a local community high school. However, with little notice, the course was withdrawn and there was no alternative provision. Mrs C was later told that community courses were only available to adults and young people over the age of 16. She said this was contrary to her experience as one of her children was aged 14 when attending the course. Mrs C complained that the council unreasonably denied her home educated children access to community courses and caused unnecessary confusion to her and her family, as their communication with her about community courses was unclear and inconsistent.

Our investigation took into account all the relevant information, including the complaints correspondence and complaints file, the council's policies on education complaints and home education, and relevant sections of the Scottish Government's home education guidance. We found that while the council applied a standard policy with regard to community education, they did not have any documentation about this. It was their intention to develop guidelines to avoid confusion to staff and customers. The council also acknowledged that one of Mrs C's children had previously been allowed to attend a community course in error. The investigation further confirmed that the information given to Mrs C was unclear and confusing, particularly in the absence of a formal written policy.

Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- apologise for the confusion caused by their correspondence;
- apologise to Mrs C's daughter for her disappointment in being allowed to successfully audition when she did not meet the qualifying criteria; and
- develop a set of written guidelines regarding access to community schools.