

SPSO decision report

Case: 201202244, Blackwood
Sector: housing associations
Subject: complaints handling
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C told us that when she complained about noise from her neighbour's house, the housing association did not deal with the problem. She also said that they did not deal with her complaint in accordance with their published complaints procedure.

Our investigation found that generally the association had acted appropriately and had taken steps to try to resolve the problem, including contacting the council's environmental health department and speaking to the neighbour concerned. We, therefore, did not uphold her complaint that the association did nothing about the noise, but we made a recommendation about one avenue that we considered should be tried again now that we have reviewed the complaint.

We did, however, find that the association had not initially registered her concerns as a complaint. Because of this, they failed to respond within their own stated time limits, and they did not provide Ms C with copies of her complaint files when she asked for them. We also found that, in his efforts to resolve the noise problem, the officer who was eventually asked to investigate both the noise issue and the complaints handling appeared to have overlooked the complaints handling issue altogether. We upheld this complaint and made recommendations to address the failings identified.

Recommendations

We recommended that the association:

- further explore with Ms C the possibility of introducing mediation between her and her neighbour;
- send Ms C a further written apology for failing to follow their complaints handling policy appropriately;
- take steps to ensure that in future they respond to requests for copies of personal information; and
- review their guidance for staff investigating complaints to ensure that each aspect of a complaint is considered and responded to at the appropriate time, and under the appropriate policy. In doing so they should take account of the guidance provided by SPSO's Complaints Standards Authority.