

SPSO decision report

Case: 201300141, Glasgow City Council
Sector: local government
Subject: refuse collection & bins
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C had complained to the council some time ago about the refuse collection service in his street. The council apologised and took action to improve Mr C's experience of the service. They told him that the local supervisor would monitor collections, gave him direct contact details to report any further difficulties and assured him that they would fully investigate any further service failings. After giving the council time to allow these measures to be implemented, Mr C felt that the service had not improved and complained again.

The council said that they treated this as a new complaint because more than a year had passed since he first complained. They did not, however, acknowledge or respond to it, and Mr C complained again. As well as complaining about refuse collection he also raised concerns about the council's complaints handling, but they did not pick up on this and Mr C asked us to look at his complaint.

Our investigation found that the council's complaints handling procedure (CHP), which is based on the model CHP from our Complaints Standards Authority, says that staff should use discretion when applying timescales. We found that Mr C contacted the council on an almost monthly basis when the service did not improve, which meant that his second complaint was not a new one. It was about an ongoing issue and should have been dealt with at stage two of their CHP. The CHP also says that the council will establish what a complaint is about at the start, but we saw no evidence that they did so in Mr C's case. Neither did we see evidence that the stage two response had senior executive sign-off which, again, is contrary to the CHP. We found that the council did not handle Mr C's complaint reasonably, and made two recommendations.

Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- apologise to Mr C for the failings our investigation identified; and
- remind staff of the requirements of the model CHP, focusing in particular on the failings our investigation identified.