

SPSO decision report

Case: 201300467, Albyn Housing Society Ltd
Sector: housing associations
Subject: repairs and maintenance
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C lives in a house that had electric night storage heaters, using an economy meter with a reduced tariff. Following public meetings with their tenants, the housing association decided to implement a programme of external wall insulation and replace night storage heating with an air source heat pump system. After the necessary consents were obtained, work started in November 2012, in phases of groups of houses. Tenants were advised of timescales and the start date, and were told that external works were weather dependent.

The internal work was completed in Mrs C's house the following February, during what turned out to be an extremely cold winter, but it was not until May that the external insulation was completed and scaffolding was removed. Mrs C complained that the information and advice she was given about the new heating system was inadequate, and that the association did not complete works within the specified timescales.

Our investigation found that the association had had a lot of contact with tenants to explain what would be involved. They had not, however, made it clear to Mrs C that she would lose her economy meter and would have to negotiate a new tariff for electricity with her energy supplier, and so we upheld her complaint about this. We did not uphold her other complaint as the association had made it clear in advance that external insulation works were weather dependent.

Recommendations

We recommended that the association:

- apologise for failing to advise Mrs C of the need to make early contact with her energy supplier;
- consider whether they should reimburse Mrs C for any unavoidable costs incurred between the removal of the economy meter and the application of the new tariff and confirm the outcome; and
- apologise for the confusion caused to Mrs C by a letter stating that the scaffolding had at that time been removed.