

SPSO decision report

Case: 201300781, The Highland Council
Sector: local government
Subject: homeless person issues
Outcome: not upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C had had to leave her accommodation, and was looking for a tenancy, when she learned that she was pregnant. The council provided short-term accommodation and assessed her as being unintentionally homeless, in priority need with a local connection and entitled to settled accommodation. Meanwhile, she was offered temporary accommodation. After her child was born Ms C received two offers of permanent housing, one from the council and one from a housing association. She refused both. The council did not accept that Ms C's refusal of the second offer was reasonable. However, because of issues in handling her appeal, they, unusually, made a further offer, which Ms C also refused. The council again regarded her grounds of refusal to have been unreasonable. They said that they had discharged their duty to Ms C as a homeless person and that she would have to leave the temporary accommodation. She complained to us that the council had failed to take appropriate account of the representations she made in appealing the third offer.

Our investigation found, however, that the council had given full consideration to Ms C's representations. In particular, they had ensured that these had been properly assessed, by both an external agency and by them, using a multi-agency assessment matrix. We did not uphold Ms C's complaint, but in view of her circumstances, we did make a recommendation.

Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- meet with Ms C at an early date to explore options for her early rehousing in either socially rented or private accommodation, and to discuss whether she might be assisted through initiatives such as the rent deposit guarantee scheme.