

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201300965, Falkirk Council  
**Sector:** local government  
**Subject:** applications, allocations, transfers & exchanges  
**Outcome:** some upheld, recommendations

### Summary

After his circumstances changed, Mr C felt that he could no longer remain in his privately rented accommodation. He was finding his situation very stressful due to mental health problems. He approached the council for assistance but he complained that the way they processed his housing application was unreasonable. He also said that they failed to follow proper processes, delayed in allowing him access to their web-based portal service and wrongly said that he had failed to obtain permission to tape a meeting. He said that the council's handling of his complaint to them about this was inadequate.

When investigating the complaint, we considered the complaints correspondence, details of Mr C's housing application, copies of the council's internal records and the council's housing allocations policy. We also contacted Mr C's community psychiatric nurse. Our investigation found that the council followed their procedures when dealing with Mr C's application and that taking his health problems into account they had, with his agreement, made arrangements for him to stay longer in his privately rented accommodation. Although Mr C was clear that he had requested the council's permission to tape a meeting he had with their officer, we found no written evidence of this. We did not uphold either of these complaints, but we did uphold the other three. There was clear evidence that the council's communication with Mr C was poor. The council acknowledged this and had apologised. There was also evidence that there was delay in allowing Mr C access to their portal helpline service, and in responding to his complaint.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- apologise for their failure in this matter; and
- emphasise to helpline staff the importance of a timely reply.