

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201301468, Fife Council  
**Sector:** local government  
**Subject:** factual error in decision-making  
**Outcome:** upheld, no recommendations

### Summary

Mr C complained that the council had not given clear reasons for refusing his application for a community care grant from the Scottish Welfare Fund. There is guidance published by the Scottish Government which sets out the process for councils to follow.

Our investigation found that the council had not clearly explained to Mr C why they considered his application to be ineligible (which was because he was not in receipt of a qualifying benefit and had not met the qualifying conditions).

Even when asked to provide a clearer explanation the council failed to tell Mr C what information they had taken into account or how they had used the government guidance in arriving at a decision. Nor had they told him whether his application was considered to be high, medium or low priority as they should have.

We upheld Mr C's complaint and found some of the conditions being applied were too narrow compared to Scottish Government guidance - in particular, the definition of 'a family.' We did not make any recommendations, however, as the council had already made improvements to their handling of applications, including their definitions of qualifying categories. The council also accepted that the explanations given could have been better and have taken steps to improve the decision letters sent to applicants.