

SPSO decision report

Case: 201301723, Falkirk Council
Sector: local government
Subject: local housing allowance and council tax benefit
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained that the council's administration of his application for housing benefit was unreasonable. He felt, for various reasons, that they had made unreasonable demands for information from him and his wife. Because their circumstances had changed, he and his wife were asked to complete a case review form. As a result of the information they included on the form, the council asked for further information about the accounts he and his wife had their state pensions paid into. Mr C was unhappy about having to provide them with this and did not send it at first. The council had given an interim award of housing benefit, but stopped it when they did not receive the further information they had requested. When Mr C provided it, the council processed his application and backdated the award.

After considering all the relevant paperwork, we did not find any evidence that the council had administered Mr C's application unreasonably. Under the relevant regulations (the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006), they were entitled to ask for this information. Although there were a couple of instances where the council could have been clearer about the information they wanted, they provided clear and correct information to Mr C at least eight times. Unfortunately, it was the delay in providing the council with that information that caused the delay in him and his wife receiving their housing benefit award.