

SPSO decision report

Case: 201301868, Clackmannanshire Council
Sector: local government
Subject: homeless person issues
Outcome: not upheld, action taken by body to remedy, no recommendations

Summary

Ms C was registered with the council as homeless and was placed in temporary bed and breakfast accommodation. She was unhappy with the standard of the accommodation and visited the council to complain as well as speaking to council officers on the phone. She said the accommodation was dirty and that the gas boiler was unsafe. She alleged residents were locked in at night and that a fellow resident was on a methadone programme. When she complained to us she told us that she was particularly unhappy that the council contacted the landlord following her complaint. She believed this allowed the landlord to make improvements to the property before the council inspected it. She said that this meant that, when inspected, the property was not in the condition it was when she stayed in it, and so ensured that her complaint was not upheld.

The council said that the landlord had shown them the appropriate safety certificates for the property and that it had passed an unannounced inspection. They had also been shown invoices for professional cleaning companies for both the interior of the property and the bed linen that was provided to Ms C. They acknowledged that the type of accommodation was not ideal, but said that on the date of Ms C's application it was the only accommodation they had available. They recognised homelessness was stressful for the individuals affected, and said staff had been reminded of the need to take the impact of homelessness into account when dealing with members of the public.

We did not uphold Ms C's complaints. Our investigation found that the council had phoned the manager of the accommodation due to Ms C's concerns about not just the property, but also her fellow residents. They had told her when she visited the council offices that this would happen, before she had made a formal complaint. We found the council had investigated Ms C's concerns appropriately and taken all reasonable steps to satisfy themselves that the property was safe and in an appropriate condition. They provided us with photographic evidence from their inspection to support this. We also found that, since Ms C's complaint, they had recruited additional staff to their homelessness unit and increased the frequency of their inspections of temporary accommodation.