

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201303383, West Dunbartonshire Council  
**Sector:** local government  
**Subject:** policy/administration  
**Outcome:** not upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mr C complained that the council had failed to respond fully to his complaint about the standard of service they provided when he applied to them for a letter of comfort (a document provided to satisfy a buyer that the local authority will not take action to have work remedied) for a property he owned. He said that the house sale did not complete on time because of the council's delay, and that he was dissatisfied because the council had maintained that they had dealt with the matter competently. He considered that their actions showed that they had no commitment to customer experience.

Our investigation found that the council had looked into the matter by reviewing the contact between Mr C and their officers, and the level of service provided. They told us that there were no specific timescales for inspections and responses to letters of comfort, but that there was guidance in the application form that Mr C had completed. This indicated that they aimed to complete a request within two weeks of receipt of an application, although the service provided was usually quicker than this. The evidence showed that they had responded to Mr C in eight working days (ie within two weeks). They accepted that they had not acknowledged all of Mr C's emails, and although they said that they had phoned him, we were unable to verify this because of a lack of records of calls made. They also said that the reply was delayed as it had to be signed off, but we found no evidence that this was not done on the day the visit to the property took place. As the time taken from the request being made to the letter being provided was within the timescale provided to the public about the service, we did not uphold the complaint. We did, however, recommend to the council that they take steps to review their record-keeping.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- take steps to review their record-keeping, especially with regard to letter of comfort inspection sheets and phone calls.