

SPSO decision report

Case: 201304742, Perth and Kinross Council
Sector: local government
Subject: communication staff attitude dignity and confidentiality
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr and Mrs C, who are council tenants, complained that the council refused to answer their complaints, that they requested urgent maintenance/repair jobs at the property but that they themselves had to pay the costs, and that the council refused to carry out other work. They also complained that the council failed to deal with a neighbour's anti-social behaviour. In addition, Mr and Mrs C were unhappy with the attitude of council staff, said that staff had been racist toward them, and were also unhappy that a member of staff taped a meeting with them. Mr and Mrs C believed that this was part of an organised council campaign against them and that the recording was authorised by senior managers.

Our investigation found that the council had responded to Mr and Mrs C's complaints. Although Mr and Mrs C did not agree with their decisions, this did not mean that the council acted improperly. We found that the council had addressed the issue of discrimination robustly, but that Mr and Mrs C had provided no evidence of discrimination, other than their dissatisfaction with the council's services. The council had tried to investigate the complaint of anti-social behaviour, but had been prevented from doing so effectively because Mr and Mrs C had refused to cooperate with the investigation.

We also found that the council had acknowledged and acted on requests for repairs, but progress had been slow because of the breakdown in their relationship with Mr and Mrs C. The council provided evidence that the works had been completed and that they had made reasonable efforts to engage with Mr and Mrs C to ensure this was done.

Finally, they had already acknowledged that it had been wrong for Mr and Mrs C to be recorded. They had apologised for this and had taken action to stop it happening again. We found no evidence that this incident was organised or approved in advance by managers, and found that the council had acted quickly to address this when Mr and Mrs C complained.