

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201305965, Knowes Housing Association Ltd  
**Sector:** housing associations  
**Subject:** terminations of tenancy  
**Outcome:** some upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mr C was a former tenant of the association. After moving out of his property, he was sent a bill for rechargeable works, which were identified during an empty property inspection and carried out by a contractor on behalf of the association. This included removing laminate and vinyl floor coverings from the property and disposing of personal belongings left in the back court. Mr C disputed the charges, saying that he was not aware that he was responsible for removing the flooring and that he had asked a friend to have the items collected from the back court. He complained that the association had not made him aware of his responsibilities before the end of his tenancy, had not told him about the rechargeable works before invoicing him and had not treated his case sensitively.

After investigating Mr C's complaints we found that, at an inspection before he moved out, the association had not made a clear record of any advice he was given on removing flooring or of any works he should carry out before the end of his tenancy. Although they had written to Mr C about his responsibilities before he moved, he told us that he had not received this, and we noted that his postcode was not included in the address. We did, however, find that the tenancy agreement made it clear that all belongings had to be removed and we took the view that he should have been aware of his responsibilities in relation to the items left in the back court.

On balance, we found that the association did not take reasonable steps to give Mr C formal notice of his responsibilities to remove the flooring and we upheld this element of his complaint. We found that they had taken reasonable measures to ensure that he was aware of the rechargeable works and we did not uphold this part of his complaint, as a detailed letter was issued the day after he moved out. We upheld the last aspect of Mr C's complaint as we found that his concerns were not treated as a complaint at an early stage and that the tone/language of some of the association's letters was not sensitive to his situation.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the association:

- highlight the need for staff to complete the pre-end-of-tenancy inspection form appropriately to avoid confusion for tenants;
- deduct all costs associated with the removal and disposal of floor coverings from the outstanding bill;
- remind staff of the complaints handling procedure guidance on the identification of a complaint; and
- apologise for the way that Mr C's complaint was handled.