

SPSO decision report

Case: 201401420, Angus Council
Sector: local government
Subject: policy/administration
Outcome: upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mrs C, who is an advice worker, complained on behalf of her client (Mrs A) about the social care provided to her late husband (Mr A) in the last days of his life. Mr A had been discharged home from hospital into the care of his GP and the district nursing service, with the support of social care officers. It was known that he was dying and there had been a meeting to discuss the support he would need at home. It was considered that Mr A should be nursed and cared for in a hospital bed. Mr and Mrs A did not want this and he was cared for in his own bed. However, there were practical difficulties with this, which compromised the support given to Mr A by council care officers. Mrs A was distressed that during the last days of her husband's life he was not afforded the dignity and respect he required and deserved.

We investigated the complaint and found that the council had acknowledged their role in the poor care provided to Mr A. Staff had not been able to manage Mr A physically because of difficulties presented by the absence of a hospital bed. They had, however, not told managers of their concerns about Mr A's care being compromised as a result of this. This was explained to Mrs A when she complained, and the council had apologised unreservedly and told her Mrs A what they had done to try to avoid this happening to someone else.

It was not in dispute that the council failed to provide Mr and Mrs A with the level of support they could have expected, so we upheld the complaint. However, the investigation also showed that the procedures the council had since put in place went far in attempting to prevent a similar situation happening. Mrs A had also received a sincere apology, so although we upheld the complaint, we did not make any recommendations.