

SPSO decision report

Case: 201406415, West Dunbartonshire Council
Sector: local government
Subject: homeless person issues
Outcome: some upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C, who is an advice worker, complained that the council gave his client (Mr A) misleading advice about the storage of his belongings during a homelessness application, and that they unreasonably delayed in responding to Mr A's requests for assistance.

Mr A's property was being repossessed, and there was likely to be a period between him leaving that property and taking up a new tenancy. Mr A said that he had been told by the council that, if he were to become homeless during this period, the council could provide storage for his belongings. He was later told that the council's policy had changed and they could no longer provide storage. However, in Mr A's case, storage was not required as the council had secured an extension to the repossession of his property, meaning he could move directly to a new property. Although we recognise that the process of making a homelessness application was very stressful for Mr A, we were satisfied that the council did not mislead Mr A. We accept their reasoning that storage was not needed as they were able to negotiate an extension to the repossession of Mr A's property which allowed time for him to be offered a permanent housing arrangement.

Mr C also complained that the council failed to communicate with Mr A following his referral from an NHS service to the council's customer and community services team. We noted the impact that Mr A said the delay in communication had on his existing poor health. The council had acknowledged the delay and apologised for it, so although we upheld the complaint, we did not make any recommendations. We were satisfied that the council had apologised and taken appropriate action to try to prevent this from happening again.