

SPSO decision report

Case: 201501534, East Lothian Council
Sector: local government
Subject: communication staff attitude dignity and confidentiality
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained about a kitchen upgrade and rewiring work at her property. She said the council did not communicate properly with her and were responsible for delays in carrying out the work. We did not find evidence that the council's communication was at fault. They met with Ms C in advance of the works and gave her a printed information leaflet explaining the tenant's responsibilities as well as the council's. Ms C said she was not able to be at the property on the morning work was due to start, so had left a key with her neighbour and had asked them to look out for the council.

There was evidence from the council's van tracking system that the workmen were on site at the time Ms C said she was told to expect them. After waiting for around 45 minutes, the work was called off. Ms C said nobody contacted her. The council said they did not have a mobile phone number for her. We concluded that a better arrangement would have been for Mrs C to tell the council she was leaving a key with her neighbour so that it could have been collected. Although this resulted in two days' delay, we concluded this was not the council's fault as work schedules of the different trades involved had to be rearranged. We found there was a further delay of three working days when water was found under the floor of Mrs C's home. Although this undoubtedly had an impact on Mrs C, we found it was not an unreasonable or excessive delay in the circumstances.

Ms C felt the council failed to acknowledge the disruption to her or provide her with assistance. We did not find evidence of this. The council's leaflet clearly acknowledged that the works were intrusive and disruptive, and Ms C received the disruption grant she was entitled to in accordance with the council's policy.