

SPSO decision report

Case: 201608076, Glasgow City Council
Sector: local government
Subject: refuse collection & bins
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained to the council about missed bin collections and their failure to lock the gates to the bin area at his home. The council said that they had spoken to operatives to remind them of the importance of locking the gate. The council also said that they replaced the locks and offered to provide Mr C with a key for the lock so that he could lock the gates should he find them open again, though Mr C said he did not receive this key. The council also provided him with direct contact details for a supervisor and manager.

After the council closed the complaint, the problems started to happen again. Mr C said he would have to chase away young people who were congregating in the area to drink and smoke. He complained that he could not get in touch with the supervisor and manager on their phones, that they were not responding to his emails and that the council had failed to inform him that these members of staff were on long-term leave.

Mr C tried to raise his complaint again after the gates were left unlocked again and the council responded advising that they were treating it as a service request and that he had completed their complaints process. Mr C complained to us that the council's operatives unreasonably failed to close and lock the gate to the bin area. He also complained that the council failed to properly investigate and provide a reasonable response to his complaint.

We found some failings in the council's actions. It was evident that their investigation of the complaint and subsequent actions were not effective, as the problem continued to persist. We also found that the final response from the council to Mr C's complaint was inadequate. We upheld both aspects of Mr C's complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Remind staff that the gate to the bin area at Mr C's home should be locked. Regular inspections should be carried out over a period of three months to ensure that this has taken place.
- Offer Mr C a key to allow him to lock the gate if he finds it open.
- Write to Mr C to apologise for failing to fully investigate his complaint and for failing to ensure that the gate was being locked.

What we said should change to put things right in future:

- Wherever possible, phone messages and emails should be checked and out-of-office notifications and voicemail messages should be changed advising when an employee is on leave.

We have asked the organisation to provide us with evidence that they have implemented the recommendations we have made on this case by the deadline we set.