

SPSO decision report

Case: 201608275, The City of Edinburgh Council
Sector: local government
Subject: repairs and maintenance
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Miss C complained about delays in the council's response to her request for them to fix a leak. She complained that the work was not completed until seven months after her request. Miss C was also unhappy as she felt the level of communication from the council during this time was poor.

The council told us that the delay in repairing the leak was caused by difficulties in accessing the property above Miss C's, as this was the source of the leak. However, they acknowledged that the delays in completing the repair were unacceptable. They also recognised that it took a significant amount of time to complete decoration and plastering work after the leak was fixed, although they believed this was down to Miss C not being readily available. The council acknowledged that they did not make attempts to explore alternative arrangements to access the property in Miss C's absence. The council also accepted that Miss C had not received appropriate communications throughout her experience, and they advised that staff training had been planned to address failings in this area.

We upheld both of Miss C's complaints. We found that the delays in carrying out the work were unreasonable, and we noted insufficiencies in the council's process. We found that Miss C was given conflicting information from different members of staff, and that she was not regularly updated on what was happening with her repair. As the work had been completed by the time Miss C brought her complaint to us, we did not make further recommendations on this aspect of the complaint. As the council had committed to undertake training to address failings in communication, we did not make further recommendations in this regard, though we did ask the council for evidence that this training had been carried out.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Miss C for the delay in dealing with the repair and for the poor level of communication throughout the process. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance.

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.