

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201608296, The City of Edinburgh Council  
**Sector:** local government  
**Subject:** repairs and maintenance  
**Decision:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Miss C reported longstanding problems with her heating and hot water and had raised previous complaints with the council about this. The council had attended Miss C's property when repair requests were raised, but did not find any issues and left with the heating in working order. Miss C made a formal complaint as she was unhappy with these findings and was of the view that the problem remained unresolved. The council responded initially by advising that, as a full inspection of the heating system had been conducted four months previously, there was nothing further that they could do. Miss C escalated her complaint which prompted an inspection from the housing area team leader and a plumber. They identified several parts which needed replaced and arranged to do this. The council's complaint response offered an apology to Miss C for the delays and stress this had caused. Miss C was unhappy at the level of service she had received and she brought her complaints to us. Miss C complained to us that the council had:

unreasonably delayed in carrying out appropriate heating and hot water repairs, in line with their obligations

failed to communicate reasonably with her throughout the process

failed to carry out a reasonable investigation into her complaints.

We obtained information from the council and were of the view that, whilst the responses to individual repair requests were prompt, the level of investigation was not proportionate to the longstanding nature of the problem. When the council had the opportunity to review their practice at stage one in the complaints process, they declined to take further action based on information obtained four months previously. They also were late in acknowledging Miss C's complaint, and late in responding to her. The council explained that an extension had been agreed with Miss C, but acknowledged that they had not confirmed this in writing and therefore had no evidence of this. We upheld all aspects of Miss C's complaint and recommended that a full and sincere apology was offered for all failings by the council. We also noted that the council had advised that training on communication had been carried out and we asked them for evidence that this training was undertaken.

### Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Miss C for:
- the unacceptable delay dealing with her repair
- the poor level of service provided, including the failings in communication and the failings in their response to her complaint
- the level of stress and upset this caused Miss C.
- The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at [www.spsso.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance](http://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.