

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201609654, Aberdeenshire Council  
**Sector:** local government  
**Subject:** policy/administration  
**Decision:** some upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mr and Mrs C were living in temporary accommodation while they were on the council's housing list for permanent accommodation. When a first floor flat was offered, Mrs C contacted the council to discuss the offer. Mrs C's health condition had deteriorated and she had started to experience difficulty with climbing stairs. As this was new information to the council, they required Mrs C to provide further information about this from a medical professional. Mrs C complained that the council required her to provide a letter from her GP, which would cost her £25. Mrs C said she believed the council's policy states that they will obtain further information about a medical condition if it is required.

The council responded to the complaint and advised that Mrs C was not requested to specifically go to her GP, but to obtain information from a medical professional. The council contacted the GP to request a refund of the £25 but this was refused.

Mrs C also complained that the council did not keep her properly informed of what was happening next regarding the property offer. She told us she knew she was required to accept the first offer of housing made to her, yet she knew she could not accept the first offer as it was on the first floor. The council confirmed with Mr and Mrs C that the first floor property was no longer appropriate and they would remain on the housing list for a permanent property with ground floor accommodation.

Our investigation found the council's policy does clearly state that if they require further information from a medical professional, they would request this information. We could not establish whether Mrs C was in fact asked to specifically contact her GP, or to contact a medical professional. We upheld this complaint, however we could not recommend a refund of £25 due to not being able to establish what was said.

Our investigation also found the council did keep Mr and Mrs C informed of the next steps. The council wrote to Mr and Mrs C and confirmed the housing offer would be withdrawn because it was no longer suitable and they would remain on the housing list for more appropriate accommodation. We found the council's level of communication to be clear and reasonable. Therefore we did not uphold this aspect of the complaint.

### Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mrs C for not clearly explaining that they should request the information they required from a medical professional. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at: <https://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.