

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201700875, Shetland Islands Council  
**Sector:** local government  
**Subject:** school transport  
**Decision:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mr C's child attends a school which is just under two miles from home, along a rural road. They receive school transport during the winter months, but not during the period between the Easter holidays and the October break. Mr C did not believe that the route between home and school was suitable for young children to walk. He raised a complaint with the council, requesting that the route be re-assessed. The route assessment report was still outstanding a year later. Mr C complained that the council unreasonably delayed in re-assessing the route and that their complaints handling had been unreasonable.

The council acknowledged that the delays in re-assessing the route were unacceptable and confirmed a number of measures they were taking to improve their service. We upheld this aspect of Mr C's complaint and recommended that the council provide a further apology.

In relation to complaints handling, we considered that there had been confusion among staff about implementing their complaints handling procedure alongside the school transport policy. We found that the council failed to comply with timescales or keep Mr C informed at each stage of the process; instead he had to continually chase them up. We upheld this aspect of Mr C's complaint. However, we noted the wide-reaching improvements implemented by the council as a result of the complaint and asked for evidence of these.

### Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise for the long delay in reassessing the route, and for the poor complaints handling and general level of customer service, including a recognition of the impact of all of this on Mr C. The apology should meet the standard set out in the SPSO's guidance on apology which can be found 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.