

SPSO decision report

Case: 201701139, Fife Council
Sector: local government
Subject: improvements and renovation
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C, who is a council tenant, complained that the council failed to ensure that her new bathroom was installed correctly as she had to report a number of leaks in the months following the installation. Ms C said that she had to report a leak on a number of occasions, and that the council and their contractor unreasonably delayed in establishing who was responsible for the leak, which led to her being left without adequate facilities for a lengthy period of time. Ms C also complained that the council delayed in completing the repairs.

The council was unable to provide accurate records in response to our investigation. It was difficult to establish exactly what happened and the reasons for the delay. We found that Ms C was left to chase up both the contractor and the council to progress the repairs and we did not find this to be acceptable. In response to our investigation, the council explained that the bathroom installation was signed off as per their normal procedures and that the leak was not related to the installation as it was not reported until one month later. We accepted that the council did ensure the bathroom was installed correctly and we did not uphold this aspect of the complaint.

However, we found that the council did not provide an adequate explanation for what happened. There did not appear to be a coordinated response from the council and Ms C was left with a leaking toilet for an unacceptable period of time. The council failed to provide evidence of a thorough investigation into Ms C's complaint. We concluded that the council unreasonably delayed in establishing who was responsible for the leak and in completing the repairs. Therefore, we upheld these aspects of the complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Ms C for failing to respond appropriately to the issues she was experiencing and for the delay in completing the repairs to her toilet. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology, available at: <https://www.spsso.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance>.

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

- Reflect on the findings of this complaint and consider how to improve their recording systems. The council should also ensure that their contractor provides accurate records and is reminded of the council's responsibilities towards their tenants to complete repairs within a reasonable timescale.

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.