

SPSO decision report

Case: 201800460, Eildon Housing Association Ltd
Sector: housing associations
Subject: repairs and maintenance
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained that she had been experiencing issues with the heating system in her home for a considerable length of time and that the actions taken by the housing association to resolve the situation were inadequate. Mrs C complained to the association on four occasions in a two year period as at times the heating system was not providing hot water or heating, or at other times was providing uncontrollable heat. The association responded within timescales to her reports of faults, however the repairs carried out did not resolve the issues. Mrs C's final complaint was escalated to senior management and the entire heating system was replaced. The association acknowledged that it had taken too long to fix the problem and upheld her complaint. Mrs C remained dissatisfied and brought her complaint to us.

Whilst we acknowledged that there were elements of the response to the faults that were outwith the association's control, we considered that the responsibility for managing the issues and co-ordinating a response ultimately lay with the association. We acknowledged that during the process the association had provided good customer service; providing an alternative heating supply, installing an electric shower, offering a good will payment and reimbursing Mrs C for her extra energy costs. However, on balance, we upheld this part of the complaint as we found that it had taken the association too long on the whole to fix the problem.

Mrs C also complained about the response she had received from the association to her complaints. We found that the association had provided a reasonable explanation regarding the actions taken to resolve the heating system issues, mitigated the financial impact of the problem and apologised to Mrs C. We did note that the association failed to signpost Mrs C to the next stage of the complaints process on a number of occasions. However, on balance, we did not uphold this part of Mrs C's complaint.

Recommendations

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

- Update their repairs policy to have a process for considering escalating repairs where issues have recurred three times or more.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- Provide information about how to escalate complaints at the end of every complaint response and stage.

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.