

SPSO decision report

Case: 201805593, Angus Council
Sector: local government
Subject: complaints handling (incl social work complaints procedures)
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained to the council about their handling of confidential documents relating to her mother (Mrs A). Her complaints were upheld and a number of recommendations were made, but the council delayed in implementing the recommendations. We investigated Mrs C's complaint about the delay. We found that the delay had been unreasonable and upheld the complaint. Although the council said that they had now implemented all of the recommendations, we requested evidence of this to satisfy ourselves that this had been done.

With regard to the complaints handling, the council should have followed their complaint process from the outset but failed to do so. When the council said that they were treating Mrs C's complaint as a Stage 2 complaint (investigation stage), as requested by Mrs C, their response showed no sign of investigation and contained inconsistent statements. We upheld this complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mrs C for the delay in implementing the recommendations, with a recognition of the impact. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.
- Apologise to Mrs C for their unreasonable complaints handling. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.

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

- Staff involved in complaint investigations should be familiar with the Complaints Handling Procedure and ensure it is followed appropriately.

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.