

SPSO decision report

Case: 201401439, Home Scotland
Sector: housing associations
Subject: improvements and renovation
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr and Mr C complained about a programme of improvement works carried out by a contractor on behalf of their landlord (the housing association). They complained about the information they were given ahead of the works, and about issues with the quality of the work and damage to their property. They also complained about the way the association and the contractor had handled their complaints.

Our investigation found that the association and the contractor had provided reasonable information ahead of the works taking place, though there was a last minute delay in one element of the work, which was unacceptable. The association had already apologised for this and paid compensation.

We reviewed the time taken to resolve the range of defects at Mr and Mr C's property, and were critical of the time taken to resolve these issues. In particular, we were critical that a meeting to resolve these issues only appeared to take place because Mr and Mr C had brought their complaint to us.

Mr and Mr C complained to both the association and the contractor on different occasions. We found that the responses they received were not proactive and did not reflect the on-going difficulties Mr and Mr C were having. The association went on to conduct a 'lessons learned' exercise, based partly on Mr and Mr C's complaints. This identified several areas of service improvement, though it is not clear that any of these issues would have come to light if Mr and Mr C had complained to us. We were critical of this approach. We were also concerned about the lack of integration between the association's complaints procedure and that of its contractors.

Recommendations

We recommended that the association:

- apologise to Mr and Mr C for the delay in correcting defects at their property following window replacement and cladding works, and for the failings identified in their complaints handling;
- provide evidence that the improvements identified in the lessons learned exercise have been implemented; and
- provide evidence of the improvements in complaints handling.