

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201603021, The Highland Council  
**Sector:** local government  
**Subject:** improvements and renovation  
**Decision:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Ms C complained that the council had failed to respond reasonably to the concerns she raised about the quality of service she had received from the council and their contractor in relation to the installation of a new heating system at her home. Ms C had complained to the council about the safety and reliability of the new heating system, as well as damage done to her carpet during the installation work. She was unsatisfied with the council's response to her complaints and brought them to us.

We found that, although the council acted in line with the requirements of the housing repairs policy, there were failings in their handling and response to Ms C's complaint. The council failed to log Ms C's initial complaint properly and they did not issue a reply to the concerns she had raised. They also failed to acknowledge a subsequent complaint Ms C submitted, and failed to respond within their timescales. We found that the council also failed to be clear with Ms C about their processes for applying for and granting compensation for damaged property. We upheld Ms C's complaint. We noted that the council had since acknowledged some of their failings, and we asked them to provide evidence of the action and staff training they had carried out as a result of Ms C's complaint.

### Recommendations

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

- The council should develop a compensation policy.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- Staff responding to complaints should be aware of their responsibilities, as per the complaints handling procedure.

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.