

SPSO decision report



Case: 201903686, Renfrewshire Council
Sector: Local Government
Subject: repairs and maintenance
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

C was a tenant of the council and requested repairs after reporting issues with damp, leaks and the boiler. When C ended the tenancy they were charged for leaving items in the property. C complained that the council's responses to C's requests for repairs, for recharging them when they left the property and how they communicated were unreasonable.

C reported 90 repairs or faults over a tenancy of many years. With the exception of two occasions, the council responded within timescales as laid out in their repairs policy. Sometimes the fault required multiple attendances (due to access requirements or parts required) and led to the completion time taking longer but the initial response was within the target timeframe. We found that the council's response to C's requests for repairs were reasonable. We did not uphold this aspect of the complaint.

The council responded to C's complaints sometimes verbally, in writing or both. It was good practice to seek practical resolutions to complaints and the council made attempts to do this with bringing forward inspections and arranging tradespeople to attend C's property. We found that not all of the points C raised were responded to when they were first raised as a complaint, requiring C to raise the same point on multiple occasions and in some instances (such as the complaints about communication and previous faulty repairs) not being responded to at all. This was unreasonable.

After the council received C's complaints they responded at the frontline resolution stage five times. The council did not advise C on how they could escalate their complaint as part of these responses after it was clear that C remained dissatisfied. It was unreasonable that the council failed to advise them of how to escalate the complaint. Therefore, we upheld this aspect of the complaint.

Lastly, the council were clear in the information which they provided to C in the tenancy agreement and terminations, that there was a requirement that C remove all belongings from the property after their tenancy ended. Not doing so would result in C being charged by the council for the removal costs. The council followed their process and their actions were reasonable. We did not uphold this aspect of the complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for failing to respond to all of the complaints they raised. 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:

- The council should advise complainants how to escalate their complaint if they remain dissatisfied.
- The council should respond to all points of complaint raised by a complainant.

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.