

**Case:** 201000660, East Ayrshire Council  
**Sector:** local government  
**Subject:** complaints handling (including social work complaints procedures)  
**Outcome:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Ms C was unhappy with the council's complaints handling when she complained to them about a social work related matter. She complained that there were delays in the complaints process; that she was not given information about the process, and that there was a delay in providing her with a report from a Complaints Review Committee (CRC).

Our investigation found that when Ms C lodged a formal complaint, the council failed to respond appropriately. They delayed in responding, and in telling her the outcome of the CRC (which the council told us was due to a particular member of staff not being available). We also found that they twice failed to tell Ms C that she could take her concerns to a CRC, despite this being part of the statutory social work complaints process.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- analyse the cause of the delays that occurred in Ms C's case and put in place measures to prevent a recurrence. The council's analysis should cover all instances of delay, but particularly look at what arrangements are required to ensure that a member of staff's allocation of different duties does not interfere with the statutory timescales for responding to complaints; and
- remind members of social work staff who are likely to deal with complaints of the requirements of the procedure, in particular with regard to how a formal complaint should be dealt with and what information should be provided to complainants about how to progress their complaints.