

SPSO decision report

Case: 201101699, Melville Housing Association Ltd
Sector: housing associations
Subject: repairs and maintenance of housing stock (incl dampness and infestations)
Outcome: upheld, action taken by body to remedy, recommendations

Summary

Mr and Mrs C completed a tenancy exchange in June 2011. On moving in, they noticed that the floor in the living room slanted steeply. The housing association suggested that a self-levelling compound (a cement-based solution) would solve the problem. A structural engineer confirmed this after a second inspection. Mr and Mrs C were initially given a date in July 2011 for the work to be undertaken and told that they would not be able to access the room for four days to allow the compound to dry. However, when the workers arrived to carry out the work and lifted the carpet they found that the slant was too deep for the compound to fill and that they would have to break up the floor and relay it. They rearranged the job for 1 August. When the engineers began work, however, they found it to be a much larger job than at first thought. It took 11 days to complete.

We found that association staff were not aware of the problem but, when it was brought to their attention, they acted promptly and appropriately and organised the initial investigation and programme of work within a reasonable timescale. Once it became clear that more extensive work was required, the association kept Mr and Mrs C informed of progress and revised timescales. The association paid for the storage of Mr and Mrs C's furniture and had offered to pay for other services, some of which Mr and Mrs C accepted and others they refused. We were satisfied that Mr and Mrs C received the appropriate allowances for disturbance and decorating costs. We took into consideration that Mr and Mrs C had signed a mutual exchange form agreeing to accept the property, including all floor coverings, as agreed with the outgoing tenant. The association have said that none of their previous tenants had alerted them to the fact that the floor was not level and Mr and Mrs C acknowledged that they did not notice it when they inspected the property, probably due to the carpeting being in place.

However, the chief executive acknowledged in a report for the appeals panel that they should have investigated the slope further at the outset and for that reason, we upheld the complaint that the association unreasonably failed to properly plan the work required to sort out the problem. As the association had already identified lessons to be learned from this matter, we recommended only that they apologise to Mr and Mrs C.

Recommendations

We recommended that the association:

- the chief executive write to Mr and Mrs C to apologise for the failure to properly investigate the slope prior to the work commencing.