

SPSO decision report

Case: 201200945, Aberdeen City Council
Sector: local government
Subject: repairs and maintenance
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

The council were due to replace the kitchen and bathroom of Mr C's council house as part of a planned modernisation programme. Some years earlier, Mr C had, with the council's permission, installed an electric shower at the foot of the bath above the taps. Two months before the work began he was visited by a council housing officer and a representative of the contractor. His recollection was that at the visit he was given two choices - a shower worked from a mixer tap at the foot of the bath, or a new electric shower that he would have to pay for. He says he chose the mixer tap arrangement. When the work was carried out, however, an electric shower was installed at the other end (the head) of the bath. Mr C complained that the council did not install the type of shower he had chosen; failed to install the electric shower in the correct position; and failed to respond to his letters to the chief executive.

Our investigation found that the council had a contract plan for all bathroom works. This clearly indicates that existing sanitary ware would be replaced in white and that an electric shower and curtain rail would be put in place at the head of the bath. The council confirmed that this would be at no cost to the tenant, and were adamant that no alternatives were offered. From the information provided, it appeared that the council's intentions may not have been explicitly communicated during the visit, but we did not uphold the first two complaints as there was no evidence that the council failed to comply with Mr C's choice or that they had installed the shower in the wrong place. We did find, however, that they had taken too long to deal with his complaint and made recommendations.

Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- ensure that in future pre-works visits in respect of bathroom and kitchen modernisation, they fully explain any works that alter an existing tenant's preference and record this discussion; and
- ensure that the chief executive writes to Mr C to apologise for the delays in dealing with his complaint.