

SPSO decision report

Case: 201201423, Maryhill Housing Association Ltd
Sector: housing associations
Subject: repairs and maintenance
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C's elderly uncle (Mr A) had been a tenant of a housing association for many years. His home is factored by a subsidiary company (the company) of the association. When that association then transferred a large quantity of housing stock to another housing association (the new association) non-common repairs (ie most internal repairs) became the responsibility of the new association. However, common repairs to external stairs and paths remained the responsibility of the company.

Mrs C complained about the poor condition of the external stairs leading to the building where Mr A lives and that they were a safety hazard. Mrs C also complained that it took over a year for outdoor handrails to be fitted, and for Mr A's kitchen drawers to be repaired. She was also unhappy that the new association did not clearly explain their repairs policy nor advise her for over a year that the factoring of Mr A's home remained the responsibility of the company.

We upheld three of Mrs C's four complaints. Our investigation found that the new association had been planning a joint programme of improvement works with the company in relation to the stairs. We also found that the new association did not know, at the time of Mrs C's complaint, that the company factored Mr A's building and so were responsible for installing the handrails. As a result of this, there was a long delay in the matter being referred to the company. We found that the records of the internal repair were misleading in that they showed that it was complete when in actual fact it remained outstanding for over a year. In addition, although the new association had been undergoing a period of change in terms of their housing stock, they should have identified that the company were the factors for Mr A's building. We made three recommendations because of these failings. However, we took the view that the new association had made reasonable attempts to respond to Mrs C's questions about their repairs criteria and to explain that repairs to the stairs would form part of a wider plan involving those residents across the estate who owned their homes.

Recommendations

We recommended that the association:

- review how the initial repair request for the drawer was handled, with a view to ensuring clear records are made and outstanding repair work is not recorded as complete without good reason;
- make a time and trouble payment to Mr A; and
- apologise to Mrs C and Mr A for all the failings identified in our report.