

SPSO decision report

Case: 201202003, Fife Council
Sector: local government
Subject: repairs and maintenance
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained to the council that a dusty black deposit had developed throughout her home over the past few years. She asked the council to investigate this, and later complained that they did not take enough action to identify its source.

Our investigation found that the council visited and suggested that the source of the black substance might be related to a nearby dual carriageway and they sealed a vent. They also said it might be from candles and incense that council officers saw above the radiators in various rooms. The council had the substance tested by a laboratory but this did not identify for certain what it was or where it was coming from. However, they were of the view that it had not come from the fabric of the building, as it had not penetrated the wallpaper. The council then told Ms C that if she wanted any further tests to be carried out, she would have to pay for them. They said, however, that if she did so and the source was something to do with the structure of the building, they would reimburse her for any costs if the work was done by an accredited contractor.

As well as having the substance tested at a laboratory, we found that the council had visited Ms C's home several times, and had arranged for her gas fire to be checked. We did not uphold her complaint, as we found that they had taken reasonable steps to have the matter investigated.