

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201202732, East Lothian Council  
**Sector:** local government  
**Subject:** complaints handling (incl social work complaints procedures)  
**Outcome:** some upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mr C complained about the council's handling of matters relating to his granddaughter (Miss A). His son (Mr A) had lost custody of his daughter (Miss A) following separation from his wife (Ms D). Whilst pursuing access to Miss A through the social work department, Mr A and Mr C raised a number of concerns about how their complaints were handled, the accuracy of information in reports, and allegations made about Mr A which they did not consider to be accurate. They also complained that Mr A's application for housing was not handled fairly.

We were satisfied that Mr C and Mr A's complaints were handled appropriately through the social work complaints procedure. Those issues that could not be considered were directed towards other more suitable organisations. We were also satisfied that Mr A's housing application was fairly handled.

We found that the council consistently acted with Miss A's interests in mind and found nothing that would question the validity of decisions made regarding her welfare. That said, we were critical of the council for failing to clearly explain the role of a person appointed to support Ms D, and for failing to properly document their consideration of counter-allegations that Mr A had made against Ms D.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- review the way that they explain the role of support workers and the level of involvement that they could have in such cases;
- apologise to Mr A for the issues highlighted in our decision; and
- review the extent to which the support worker may have been providing a service to Miss A as well as Ms D and provide details on the outcome of their review to Mr A.