

SPSO decision report

Case: 201607398, Sanctuary (Scotland) Housing Association Ltd
Sector: housing associations
Subject: repairs and maintenance
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained that the association did not respond reasonably to his requests for repairs to his heating system. Mr C reported the failure of his heating system and the association considered several options including repairing the existing system, replacing it with a new system and disposing of the property altogether. The results of an inspection recommended that the system be replaced. This same recommendation had also been made the previous year, before Mr C had made his complaint. The association replaced the heating system seven months after Mr C made the complaint and responded to his complaint a couple of months after the matter was resolved. Mr C was unhappy with this response and brought his complaint to us.

We found that the association took longer than was reasonable to repair Mr C's heating, did not communicate effectively during this period and did not respond to Mr C in line with their complaints procedure. We upheld Mr C's complaint. However, we noted that the association made offers to Mr C that were roughly equivalent to his rent liability for the period he was without heating.

Recommendations

What we said should change to put things right in future:

- Consideration should be given to whether the association effectively co-ordinate and monitor the progress of repairs. This consideration should include the allocation of responsibility for completion of repairs, the assessment of the history of the property, the severity of the required repair, the timescale for completion, and the managing of customer expectations.
- Consider whether it would be more efficient and effective to use only one contact record system.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- Remind all complaints handling staff of the requirement to respond to complaints in line with the Customer Contact, Complaints Handling and Compensation – Scotland Procedure.