

SPSO decision report

Case: 201700194, East Lothian Council
Sector: local government
Subject: repairs and maintenance
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr and Mrs C raised a number of complaints about the council regarding various housing repairs. They complained that the council did not issue an invoice for a repair that was carried out until 18 months later and they felt that this delay was unreasonable. They also complained that the council unreasonably required them to provide receipts as proof of purchase when they were trying to submit an insurance claim for damage caused to their property. They did not think it was reasonable to expect tenants to retain receipts for items that were purchased a number of years ago. They also complained that the council unreasonably delayed in completing a communal repair to the chimney at their property.

The council acknowledged that they delayed in issuing the invoice for the repair and they agreed to cancel it. We upheld this aspect of the complaint.

The council confirmed that they will accept forms of evidence other than receipts when considering an insurance claim. We found that the letter provided with the insurance form does not provide clear information in this regard. We upheld this part of the complaint.

The council explained that the repair to the chimney was categorised as a non-emergency repair and that it therefore had no timescale attached to it. The council confirmed that, at the time of our investigation, the repair order had been sent to the contractor and that they would expect the repair to be completed soon. We found the council's actions to be reasonable and we did not uphold this complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mr and Mrs C for unreasonably delaying in sending them an invoice for a repair. Also apologise for failing to provide clear information on how to submit an insurance claim.

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

- The information provided by the council with insurance claim forms should be reviewed to ensure that customers are aware that other forms of evidence may be accepted if receipts are not available.

We have asked the organisation to provide us with evidence that they have implemented the recommendations we have made on this case by the deadline we set.