

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201701220, Fife Council  
**Sector:** local government  
**Subject:** complaints handling (incl social work complaints procedures)  
**Decision:** not upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mr C complained that the council had failed to appropriately handle a complaint he had made about the way in which they had investigated adult protection concerns he raised regarding his mother. The council admitted that they did not follow the usual complaints process in investigating Mr C's complaint. They said that Mr C made multiple complaints and continued to raise his dissatisfaction in correspondence. The council decided to deal with all of the issues raised in a single case review. After the first case review was complete the council agreed to a second case review.

Ultimately, we decided that the process offered by the council was equivalent to the complaints process, and although there was some confusion in respect of communication, ultimately Mr C got the kind of response he would have had the council's complaints procedure been followed. The complaint had been considered in the usual way by a complaint review committee, as was Mr C's right under the social work complaints process at the time. We did not uphold the complaint, however, we recommended that the council apologise to Mr C for the confused communication regarding the handling of the complaint.

### Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mr C for the confused communication around how the complaint was going to be handled. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at <https://www.spsso.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance>.

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.