

SPSO decision report

Case: 202303409, West Dunbartonshire Council
Sector: Local Government
Subject: Neighbour disputes and anti-social behaviour
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

C complained that the council failed to deal with concerns that they raised about alleged anti-social behaviour (ASB) involving a neighbour.

During our investigation, we considered whether or not the council had followed their anti-social behaviour policy (ASB policy) in relation to their handling of C's concerns. We found that the ASB service had appropriately responded to C's first two calls. However, we found that C raised further concerns with the housing team via email, and no evidence was provided by the council to indicate that this information was appropriately passed on to the ASB service for their consideration. The council also failed to provide this office with evidence that they had contacted Police Scotland in relation to the incidents reported by C. We also found that the council failed to keep C informed and up-to-date. Therefore, we upheld this part of C's complaint.

C also complained that the council failed to handle their complaint reasonably. The council accepted that there were failings in relation to timescales and acknowledgement of C's complaint. We found further failings relating to timescales, communication and record-keeping. Therefore, we upheld this part of C's complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for the failings identified. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.

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

- Relevant information in relation to alleged anti-social behaviour should be referred to the appropriate service and / or dealt with appropriately and in line with the relevant guidance. The council should communicate with service users in line with the process for addressing ASB.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- Complaints should be handled in line with the council's complaint handling procedure. We offer SPSO accredited Complaints Handling training. Details and registration forms for our online self-guided Good Complaints Handling course (Stage 1) and our online trainer-led Complaints Investigation Skills course (Stage 2) are available at <https://www.spsso.org.uk/training-courses>.