

Waste & Recycling

What you said (Resident)

The complainant had made repeated complaints about her missed bin collection service and her complaint was subject to investigation at stages 1 and 2 of the complaints procedure. A period of monitoring had taken place as a result but unfortunately the complainant had cause to refer her case again to the Council as collections had again been missed. The case was then subject to an independent investigation at stage 3 of the Council's complaints procedure.

What we did (The Council)

The case was discussed with the Waste & Recycling Manager to establish why, after a period of monitoring with no reported issues, that soon after monitoring had ceased the problem had occurred again.

It transpired that at the time of the further monitoring process there had been changes in personnel in the team which may have contributed to the further missed collections. It was necessary to reinstate confidence to the complainant that the problems would not recur and consequently the bin collection service at this property was placed on permanent monitoring. The complainant was advised accordingly and she was happy with this outcome.

How we expect our service to get better

The lesson to be learned from this complaint is that there is a need to ensure that the team increase communication with new personnel as a matter of routine for those properties subject to monitoring.

Housing Benefit

What you said (Resident)

The complainant was dissatisfied that he was being pursued for overpayment of benefit when he had not directly received this benefit payment. He believes that this was inappropriate and his complaint was subject to investigation at stages 1 and 2 of the complaints procedure.

The view was that the complaint was not upheld however the complainant remained dissatisfied and requested this be investigated at the final stage of the complaints procedure as the complainant felt that he was not liable for payment.

What we did (The Council)

The case was reviewed. It concluded that where overpayments have been made letters are issued in the first instance advising customers of an overpayment and that appropriate recovery action will follow. There did not appear to be any evidence to

indicate that the complainant was in receipt of any letter advising him of this and the first time he became aware was when he received the reminder notice.

Additionally, there is no record that that the department requested that the complainant was asked to resubmit a copy of his notification advising of a change in circumstances, had this been the case then the overpayment would have been identified much sooner. This should have been requested so that the Council was satisfied that validated recovery was required.

The documentation that was signed by the complainant's landlord also placed ownership on the landlord to notify the Council of any changes in circumstances. The landlord declaration indicates that if an overpayment of housing benefit occurs for any reason, the landlord must repay the overpayment to the Council immediately. There was no evidence that this was pursued by the department, who are of the view that this was income related, hence why it was not directly pursued with the landlord.

How we expect our service to get better

The lessons to be learned from this complaint are the need to ensure that due process is applied when recovery action is taken on cases such as this. Additionally the necessity to ensure robust records management is in place to ensure lines of enquiries are clearly undertaken.

The recommendation was that the account be rectified and the costs would no longer be pursued.

Repairs- Quality and Delays

What you said (Resident)

The complainant registered concerns about work being undertaken in her kitchen which had resulted in alleged damage to her cooker. The case had been investigated at stages 1 and 2 and commitments were given to resolve the case, however the complainant contacted the Council again as she was dissatisfied with the length of time that had been taken to remedy the repairs and also that this incident only happened, in her view, due to the faulty workmanship.

What we did (The Council)

An independent investigation took place at the final stage of the complaints procedure and discussions took place with a senior surveyor who was requested to visit the property. The complaint concluded that the fittings that had been used to complete the initial works in the kitchen area above the cooker were not fit for purpose and consequently attributed to the damage to the resident's cooker.

It was agreed with the resident that the senior surveyor would contact the cooker supplier to arrange for four replacement products to be sourced with associated costs being met by the Council.

How we expect our service to get better

The investigation concluded that the quality of work was sub standard and this was referred back to the Council's appointed contractors as a case study to ensure the matter be raised as part of 'tool box' talks.

The resident received regular updates with regard to the progress of the repairs and she thanked the team.

Repairs - Risk Management

What you said (Resident)

The complainant was dissatisfied with the way in which repairs to his property had been undertaken; in particular he was of the view that the Council had not taken appropriate steps when managing the presence of asbestos at his property.

The complainant escalated his complaint to the final stage of the Council's complaints process and it was subject to an independent review. The complaint was upheld.

What we did (The Council)

The investigation concluded that there was a lack of appropriate risk management regarding the safeguarding of the complainant's personal effects when it became apparent that asbestos was present. Once asbestos particles had been found corrective action was not taken to ensure essential items were covered.

There was also a lack of robust follow up action in dealing with the case, despite a commitment being given in a previous complaint response by the Housing Department.

The resident decided to have an independent asbestos report undertaken which, when asked to submit this to the Council, it was subsequently lost by the department.

How we expect our service to get better

It is important that lessons are learnt from this complaint and the stage 3 independent investigator has recommended the following:

- ▶ Documented risk management is important when ensuring tenant's personal effects once asbestos has been found. Compliance to health and safety requirements must be adhered to at all times.
- ▶ Monitoring of actions arising following complaints must take place by the department to ensure commitments are delivered and further complaints are reduced
- ▶ The department reviews its record management practices to ensure that all documents is secured stored and appropriate action is taken

