

APPENDIX 1 - CASE STUDIES

Case study – Debt Recovery Service

What you said

Miss Q had complained to the council with regard to alleged harassment from the Debt Recovery Service relating to a charge which had been applied to her for non-attendance at a course delivered by the council. Miss Q stated that she had contacted the service to inform them that she did in fact attend the course and their records are therefore incorrect.

Additionally, Miss Q alleged that there had been a breach of data protection whilst she had attempted to address her concerns, as the details of another individual had been included in email correspondence to Miss Q by the council.

The service informed Miss Q that they would reimburse her the charge they had applied for course non-attendance, however despite waiting several months this had still not been received. Her case was then referred to the Corporate Complaints Team for an independent investigation.

What we did

The independent investigation concluded that the complaint had not been handled in line with the complaints procedure although it recognised that the service had attempted to address the complainant's concerns through email communication. The concerns regarding the alleged data protection breach were investigated but were unfounded.

The intervention from the independent investigating officer ensured that the reimbursement of the charge applied was acted upon immediately, and Debt Recovery was advised to make no further contact with Miss Q. An apology was extended to Miss Q for the inconvenience she had been caused and as a goodwill gesture the service also extended further training opportunities at no extra cost to Miss Q.

The learning from the investigation was that the service must follow the complaints procedure at all times and ensure complaint outcomes are robustly acted upon and monitored and tracked. This would have avoided unnecessary contact from the complainant.

How we expect our services to get better

The learning will result in improved service delivery.

Case study – Housing recharges

What you said

Mrs T complained that she has been invoiced in relation to property recharges six months after she had moved into another council property and that the applied charges were not her full responsibility. She states that some of the rechargeable repairs were the responsibility of the previous tenant and therefore she was not in agreement to paying the costs. Her case was referred to the council's Debt Recovery Department to seek recovery of monies due. In view of the continued dissatisfaction the case was referred to the Corporate Complaints Team for an independent investigation to be carried out.

What we did

The investigation concluded there to be insufficient evidence to substantiate the claim that the tenant should meet the full costs of recharges. There was lack of photographic and documentary evidence on file. Officers advised that the initial recharge costs are provided 'at a point in time', i.e. at the point of viewing and that it was possible that these would change once the tenant had moved out as at this stage any further rechargeable repairs would become evident. However, there was no evidence to support that this had been communicated with the resident and it was not detailed on any paperwork.

As a result of this the rechargeable invoice was amended to only include the costs where there was clear evidence in place, an apology was extended to the complainant for any inconvenience caused.

The investigation recommended that the service review its current forms and procedures when considering and applying recharges, this was shared and agreed with the Repairs Manager who had already commenced a review of the service.

How we expect our services to get better

The revised procedures will ensure that the service have clear evidence in place when requesting payment from residents relating to remedial repairs following tenancy moves.

Case study – Waste & Recycling missed collections

What you said

Mr K had complained that his waste bins had been repeatedly missed over several weeks and following investigation the service informed him that they had spoken with crew members and reminded them of the required level of service they are expected to deliver. Unfortunately despite this there were still repeated incidents of missed collections and the case was escalated to the final stage of the council's complaints procedure.

What we did

As part of the investigation a review of the collection service / route was undertaken and the case was discussed with senior officers. The investigating officer instructed that the collections for Mr K be monitored for the next four weeks to ensure that there are no further reports of missed collections. This was completed and Mr K reported no further incidents.

The service was again reminded of the importance to comply with the appropriate service level requirements.

How we expect our services to get better

The council will instruct monitoring of waste collections if there are continued reports of missed collections, this will ensure that our residents are not subject to inconvenience and dissatisfaction.

Case study – Human Resources Recruitment

What you said

Miss S applied for a post with the council and following interview she was informed she was not successful. She was of the view that the recruitment and selection process was flawed in that it did not comply with equal opportunities; additionally that she had been informed that all other applicants had scored higher than her at interview despite being informed initially that only one applicant had scored higher. The complaint was investigated initially by the service but due to the continued dissatisfaction of Miss S, it was agreed that an independent investigation could be conducted at the final stage of the council's complaints procedure.

What we did

As part of the investigation Miss S was interviewed, as was officers involved in the interview process and officers within Human Resources.

The investigation concluded that the council had complied with equal opportunities and this was not a matter of concern. There were a total of three officers appointed to the positions. With regard to the allegation concerning the scoring of other applicants, the investigation concluded that two of the applicants interviewed had scored higher than Miss S at the interview stage and evidence, by way of interview scoring sheets and interviewees notes had confirmed this. It transpired that the other successful applicant had been interviewed in a prior round of interviews for the post and this is in line with the council's recruitment policy. However, the supporting paperwork confirming the score sheets for this successful applicant could not be located and was therefore not presented to the independent investigating officer as part of his enquiries. Subsequent discussions with officers however did conclude that the third applicant was more suitable.

The investigating officer concluded that the absence of record keeping was key learning from this complaint and the need to retain relevant and accurate recruitment records is an essential requirement.

How we expect our services to get better

The investigation recommended that going forward the council implements a control to ensure service areas return to Human Resources key recruitment paperwork before an offer of employment can be made. This work has commenced and will ensure full visibility of record keeping and recruitment decisions.

