

SPSO decision report



Case: 202404489, River Clyde Homes
Sector: Housing Associations
Subject: Repairs and maintenance
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

C complained on behalf of their parent (A) who is a tenant of the housing association. C complained that the association did not undertake roughcast render works at A's property within a reasonable timescale. A was concerned about the condition of the roughcast render at their property after some had fallen. An inspection carried out found that repairs were required.

Over six months later, no work had been undertaken and more roughcast render fell from the property. A complained to the association about the length of time it had taken for the roughcast render works to be undertaken. The complaint was upheld and the association said they were in the process of procuring a contractor which they estimated would take four to six weeks.

When this time had elapsed, C escalated A's complaint with the association to stage 2 of their complaints procedure. The association reiterated their previous apology and that they were in the process of appointing an alternative contractor. The association said that they hoped works could begin within a month and that dampness and mould would be treated once those works had been completed. They said that they would provide an update when the programme of works was ready to commence. C was unhappy with this response and raised their complaint with this office.

We found no evidence of a proper assessment of the scale of the required works until approximately five months after the need for repairs was confirmed. We also found no evidence of the association taking action to appoint a contractor until more than six weeks after their stage 2 response to C. The association did not assess the urgency of the required works, nor did it consider how failing to undertake them had impacted, or could impact, A's living conditions. There was also no evidence of structured or consistent action being taken to progress the matter. Therefore, we upheld C's complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to A that they did not take reasonable steps to have roughcast render works progressed and completed at A's property within a reasonable timescale. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/meaningful-apologies.
- The association should contact C to ensure any outstanding roughcast render and associated works repairs are completed within a reasonable timescale, and that the progress of these are reasonably monitored.

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

- The association carry out repairs within a reasonable period of becoming aware that they are needed, in line with the terms of the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- The association's complaint responses should make clear whether the complaint has been upheld and complainants are updated as promised. The association should take action to address areas for improvement identified in their investigation of complaints. The association should proactively monitor and follow up on actions promised in complaint responses. 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>.

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.