

Council forced to make apology to Broomhouse residents

by Joseph Anderson Local Democracy Reporter

The City of Edinburgh Council has been forced to apologise to a family after years of antisocial behaviour, abuse and physical violence from their neighbours was ignored.

For over five years, Elizabeth Hume, 72, of Broomhouse Grove, was the victim of a pair of neighbours who intimidated and threatened her, as well as allegedly assaulting her family.

Despite being made aware of the antisocial behaviour of the neighbours for years, the council failed to record incidents and take appropriate action, leaving Ms Hume and her family at the mercy of her abusive neighbours.

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) has forced the council to apologise to Ms Hume's son, Alexander Hume, after he complained his mother's case was neglected.



Alexander Hume

Alexander, 47, said the abuse began in 2014, when the neighbours first moved in: "It started off with low level stuff, directed towards my mum. My dad died about seven years

ago, just before these neighbours moved in.

“My mum would sit out in the garden, just trying to enjoy her time after my dad had died, and it started with them saying things like ‘we’re coming to get you’ to try and upset her, and to antagonise her.

“My sister attempted to speak with them but then my sister became the target of their attention. They would shout abuse at her and then it shifted to me.

“I eventually had to get a non-harassment order against the neighbours and my mum was in the process of getting one when they moved out.

“It all culminated in a family barbeque in 2019 where they attacked my brother Kevin with a glass bottle, my sister Louise and my sister-in-law were assaulted as well, and police attended with multiple vans.

“We’ve had threats to torch my mum, they threatened to torch her garden, and to put stones through her windows.

“My other sister Linda ended up moving to live with my mum to make sure she was okay because the neighbours had threatened to ‘send people through her door’.”



Ms Hume lives in a ground floor flat, which was adjacent to the property inhabited by the antisocial pair.

Mr Hume said the family was in constant contact with the council's adult support team, who did little to help: " We regularly got in touch with the council, to the point where officers from head of adult support, MSP Gordon MacDonald and Councillor Catherine Fullerton were in my mum's house at the same time, all talking about what was going on.

"We contacted them sometimes daily, sometimes twice a day, three times a day.

"There was always some point within a week where we made contact with the council.

"The council would get in touch with the police, who would say they couldn't do anything because there was no crime currently being committed, and that it was matter for the council.

"Because the council didn't keep accurate records, when it came to push things forwards they'd say there wasn't enough

evidence to go on.”

Mr Hume alleges the council moved out other neighbours who were terrorised by the pair, and even asked his mother if she would consider moving from her family home, rather than moving the problematic neighbours, saying “they offered to move my mum out from the home that my dad had lived and died in because they couldn’t deal with the neighbours.”



Last year, a change of staff at the council culminated in a change of fortunes for the family, as accurate records were then taken by council officers.

However, the ordeal only ended for the family when the abusive neighbours were finally moved to a brand new apartment elsewhere in the capital.

After complaining to the SPSO, the ombudsman ruled the council must apologise to the Hume family, after the local authority admitted “there had historically been a failure to appropriately record and take action on reports of anti-social behaviour, and we considered this failing to be unreasonable.”

The apology, addressed to Mr Hume, reads: “We wish to sincerely apologise to yourself and your family for failing to appropriately record and take action on reports of antisocial behavior; and acknowledge the impact this has had on you as a family.

“We acknowledge that had appropriate recording taken place, this may have resulted in earlier action being taken.

“Please be advised that as a result of the SPSO investigation and subsequent recommendations, Family and Households Support Service procedures and practices have recently been reviewed and revised.

“The specific matters highlighted by your complaint have been discussed and reviewed with the officers involved to ensure we are able to learn and improve the way in which we respond to residents and families.

“In summary, please accept my apologies on behalf of Family and Household Support for the inadequate level of service you feel you received in response to the complaints you and your family made against your neighbour and their family.”

When approached, the council refused to comment, saying the case is still ongoing.

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