

Council tenant moved to home with broken heating

The City of Edinburgh Council has been ordered to apologise to one of its tenants moved into a home with broken heating and smoke alarms – which staff deemed as being in a “safe and lettable condition”.

The watchdog which investigates the practices of local authorities said requests for repairs to the property were ignored, leaving the individual to make arrangements themselves.

Complaints were upheld after an investigation found flaws with the council’s “systems to record safety and quality checks” and a failure to “communicate effectively” with the tenant, who was referred to only as ‘C’ in a report.

Staff also “failed to recognise” the impact the issues had, with the authority urged to “demonstrate empathy” in future by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO).

In their initial complaint the tenant said the council “unreasonably assessed that a property was in a safe and lettable condition” when they moved in and failed to “make, or communicate, reasonable arrangements for carrying out repairs, and that the council failed to provide a reasonable response”.

In its recommendations the SPSO demanded an apology be made for “failing to check that the heating and smoke alarm systems were in full working order”.

The council was reminded that tenants “must have a satisfactory provision for heating their property”.

The report said: “We found that C was put to having to arrange repairs that could have been carried out before the property was let.

“We also found that the council did not communicate effectively with C when appointments were cancelled or had to be rearranged. We therefore upheld this aspect of the complaint.

“The capacity of the council’s systems to record safety and quality checks led to the council being unable to evidence that the property met the lettable standard at the time the tenancy was allocated.”

The City of Edinburgh Council has been approached for comment.

by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter