

14 January 2019

Ombudsman asks Housing Executive to look again at grant application

The Public Services Ombudsman has upheld a complaint from a member of the public who complained about the way the Housing Executive handled her request for a grant to buy a property.

The woman believed that the Housing Executive was responsible for her having to sell her home due to anti-social behaviour from other tenants.

The Ombudsman's investigation looked at whether the Housing Executive followed its policies and procedures on grant allocations of this type. It also looked at how it dealt with the subsequent complaint by the woman.

The Ombudsman found that when dealing with the request, the Housing Executive did not follow the processes laid out in its Grants Manual. It also did not maintain appropriate records to indicate that the application was assessed against a number of 'exceptional circumstances' which may have allowed the grant to be awarded. Finally, it failed to give the woman a full explanation of its decision.

Because of these failures the Ombudsman asked the Housing Executive to look again at the grant application. However, she stated that the payment of any grant was still a discretionary decision for the Housing Executive to make.

To help reduce similar complaints in the future, the Ombudsman also recommended that the Housing Executive make changes to its Grant Manual, and stressed the importance of good record keeping and providing clear, unambiguous and accurate responses to applicants.