# Slough council ordered to pay thousands over unaffordable temporary housing rent



A recent ruling has compelled Slough Borough Council to compensate a woman £3,060 after it charged her an unaffordable rent during her stay in temporary accommodation due to homelessness. The decision followed a thorough investigation by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, which uncovered significant failures on the part of the council. Specifically, the investigation revealed that the council did not adequately assess the woman’s financial capacity to afford the rent and failed to notify her of any increases in rental charges.

The council has admitted fault in this matter, offering to make amends by paying the difference between Ms X's housing benefit and the rental demand during the disputed period of February to March 2024. However, in a clear signal that this response fell short of expectations, the ombudsman deemed the offered compensation insufficient, ultimately recommending a more generous payment.

In response to the findings, Slough Borough Council extended an apology and has taken steps to rectify its internal processes by updating training for staff to underscore the critical nature of affordability assessments in housing situations. This case is part of a worrying trend in local councils facing scrutiny for their handling of housing and related services.

Similar issues have emerged in other councils across the region, highlighting systemic problems in local government responses to housing needs. For instance, a case was reported in which a disabled woman in Slough received £3,550 after experiencing a nearly year-long delay in the processing of her stairlift application. The ombudsman identified that the council's reliance on a points-based waiting system for home adaptations contravened statutory guidance, compelling the council to commit to swift processing of such applications in the future.

Similar accountability measures have been seen across other councils. In Oxford, a woman was awarded £3,650 when her eviction case management was found inadequate, with emergency accommodations lasting longer than necessary due to the council’s sluggish response. The Local Government Ombudsman, having investigated the council's handling, recommended immediate changes to enhance the homelessness service.

Another poignant case involved a woman in Wokingham who, due to delays amounting to 15 months, received £3,000 after her mental health care needs were neglected. The ombudsman highlighted the council’s failure to effectively manage the case and ensure timely referrals to necessary care providers.

These incidents are indicative of a broader failure in local authorities to ensure timely and adequate support for vulnerable populations, particularly during the ongoing housing crisis. With numerous councils facing similar complaints and subsequent investigations, there is a mounting call for heightened accountability in how housing services are managed. As councils implement corrective measures in the wake of such rulings, the hope is that receptive changes will translate into improved outcomes for residents navigating the complex and often confusing landscape of local government support systems.

In sum, Slough Borough Council's recent experiences serve as a crucial reminder of the importance of thorough assessments in housing policy, echoing across multiple local councils as they strive to uphold the rights and needs of those most vulnerable within their communities.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c20qe23yqv9o)
2. Paragraph 2: [[1]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c20qe23yqv9o)
3. Paragraph 3: [[1]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c20qe23yqv9o), [[3]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-berkshire-63489173)
4. Paragraph 4: [[4]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn8x45rjl05o)
5. Paragraph 5: [[5]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cz9pkg93lqwo)
6. Paragraph 6: [[6]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cv22wq5ne2zo)
7. Paragraph 7: [[7]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c28edw3v8xxo)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c20qe23yqv9o> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c20qe23yqv9o> - Slough Borough Council was ordered to pay a woman £3,060 after charging her unaffordable rent during her temporary homelessness accommodation. An investigation by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman found that the council failed to assess the woman's ability to afford the accommodation and did not inform her of rent increases. The council accepted its fault and offered to pay the difference between the woman's housing benefit and the rental charge between February and March 2024. However, the ombudsman deemed this insufficient and recommended further compensation. The council apologized and updated staff training to emphasize the importance of affordability checks.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-berkshire-63489173> - A disabled woman in Slough was awarded £3,550 in damages after the council took nearly a year to decide on her stairlift application. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman found that Slough Borough Council operated a points-based waiting list for adaptations, which is against statutory guidance. The delay forced the woman to live downstairs for almost a year, impacting her mental well-being. The council accepted the findings and agreed to process applications in line with statutory timeframes.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn8x45rjl05o> - Oxford City Council was ordered to pay a woman £3,650 after mishandling her case before and after her eviction. The Local Government Ombudsman found that the council was too slow to react to the woman's application for emergency help and placed her and her family in emergency accommodation for too long. The council apologized and implemented changes to its homelessness service in response to the findings.
5. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cz9pkg93lqwo> - Wokingham Borough Council was ordered to pay £3,000 to a woman with mental health issues who had no care for 15 months. The Local Government Ombudsman found that the council took six weeks to pass the case to the Community Mental Health Team and failed to provide sufficient oversight, causing distress and undermining the woman's mental health. The council was also at fault for keeping poor records and not seeking care providers quickly after the assessment.
6. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cv22wq5ne2zo> - Brent Council was ordered to pay a family of six more than £3,600 after they were left living in a 'severely overcrowded' two-bedroom property. The Local Government Ombudsman found that the council failed to offer the family more appropriate housing, leaving them in unsuitable conditions for 18 months longer than necessary. The council apologized and offered suitable accommodation to the family.
7. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c28edw3v8xxo> - Slough Borough Council was ordered to pay a mother £9,400 after her autistic son was deprived of education for more than a year. The Local Government Ombudsman found that the council failed to find alternatives when a school refused to take the child, causing distress and frustration for the mother. The council was also found to have handled the mother's complaints poorly and kept poor records.