

SPSO decision report

Case: 201603926, Dumfries and Galloway Council
Sector: local government
Subject: complaints handling (incl social work complaints procedures)
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained to the council about the actions of their social work department. She was dissatisfied with their response and a Complaints Review Committee (CRC) was held. Ms C complained to us about the processes involved leading up to and including the CRC. In particular, she said that the terms of her complaint were not agreed with her in advance, further issues that were raised in advance of the CRC were not considered and her complaints about her dissatisfaction were not properly considered.

We made further enquiries of the council and found that contrary to their procedure, Ms C's complaints had not been agreed with her in advance. While the further information she provided was considered, it had not been acknowledged and she had not been told that it would be heard by the CRC. This led to Ms C feeling that her case had not been properly heard. We, therefore, upheld Ms C's complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- The council should apologise to Ms C for failing to agree the terms of her complaint in advance.
- The council should apologise to Ms C for failing to acknowledge the issues she raised prior to the CRC.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- Staff who act as investigating officers should agree the terms of complaints in advance.

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.