

SPSO decision report

Case: 201800410, Aberdeen City Council
Sector: local government
Subject: complaints handling (incl social work complaints procedures)
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C became an informal carer to her two grandchildren when they were removed from their mother's care at the council's request. Mrs C complained to the council about the support they provided to her as an informal carer. Mrs C said that she did not feel the council took seriously the concerns she was raising about the children's wellbeing and behaviour, that they did not recognise her own personal circumstances, such as her own health needs and that they delayed in providing financial assistance.

The council explained that Mrs C received support from a family support worker and that a nursery placement was provided; however they acknowledged that there was a delay in providing financial assistance and in arranging the nursery placement due to it being in another local authority area.

We took independent social work advice. The adviser queried the appropriateness of the statutory powers that the council chose to use when they decided to remove the children from their mother's care. While we noted that Mrs C received support from a family support worker and advice by telephone, we considered it was unreasonable that the allocated social worker did not visit Mrs C and the children until almost three weeks after they were placed in her care. We concluded that the council failed to take a proactive approach to planning the support Mrs C might require and overall, they failed to provide appropriate and timely support. We upheld the complaint and made recommendations for learning and improvement.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mrs C for failing to provide proactive support to her and offer her the opportunity of a meeting to discuss any outstanding concerns. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance.

What we said should change to put things right in future:

- The council should reflect on the findings of this investigation, identify appropriate further learning, and feedback to staff in a supportive manner.