

SPSO decision report

Case: 201806073, Dumfries and Galloway Council
Sector: local government
Subject: child services and family support
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained that the council failed to take action within a reasonable timeframe to investigate the concerns he reported about his child, including the delay in the council speaking to his child about the concerns.

We took independent advice from a social worker. We found that, as Mr C's concern was not dealt with as a child protection investigation, there are not specific timescales that are required to be met. In light of this, the actions taken by the council and the timescales for the actions taken were not unreasonable in the circumstances. However, we found that there were delays in recording the referral Mr C made to the council and the action taken by them in response to Mr C's referral. We also found that there was no contemporaneous record of the decision not to progress Mr C's referral while the allocated social worker was on leave. We upheld this aspect of Mr C's complaint.

Mr C also complained that the council failed to handle his complaint reasonably. We found that the council's response did not address a particular aspect of Mr C's complaint. We upheld Mr C's complaint that the council failed to handle his complaint reasonably.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mr C for failing to address all the points of his complaint. 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:

- Decisions not to progress referrals when an allocated social worker is on leave should be recorded clearer.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- Complaint responses should address all the issues raised. This is in accordance with the model complaints handling procedure: [HYPERLINK "http://www.valuingcomplaints.org.uk/sites/valuingcomplaints/files/resources/SW-Model-CHP.pdf"](http://www.valuingcomplaints.org.uk/sites/valuingcomplaints/files/resources/SW-Model-CHP.pdf)
www.valuingcomplaints.org.uk/sites/valuingcomplaints/files/resources/SW-Model-CHP.pdf