

SPSO decision report

Case: 201702396, Glasgow City Council
Sector: local government
Subject: communication / staff attitude / dignity / confidentiality
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C raised concerns about the way in which a social work review meeting, relating to his partner's elderly mother (Mrs A), was conducted. Mr C wanted the minutes of the previous meeting to be reviewed at the start so that he could raise points relating to that minute. This did not happen and Mr C raised this issue with the chairperson. Following discussions, the chairperson chose to suspend the meeting. Mr C complained that the council:

failed to reasonably address the genuine concerns raised by Mr C and his partner about inaccuracies in the previous minute;

unreasonably terminated the meeting stating that it was due to Mr C's behaviour;

unreasonably failed to obtain independent evidence of Mr C's behaviour at the meeting before responding to the complaint; and

unreasonably failed to confirm the council's policy on the roles and responsibilities of a chairperson when responding to the complaint.

We found that it was reasonable that a chairperson should be able to conduct a meeting as they saw fit, provided they met the purpose of that meeting. However, we considered that the chairperson should have clearly communicated how the meeting was to be conducted. This should have included reference to the fact that the previous minute of a meeting would not be addressed because the chairperson had not been present at that meeting. The chairperson should also have stated who would have been able to address any queries about the previous minute. We upheld this aspect of the complaint.

In relation to Mr C's behaviour, we agreed that the council were not required to seek a second opinion from another person present at the meeting. We found that if a chairperson felt they could not carry out the purpose of a meeting due to the actions of someone present then they were entitled to suspend that meeting. We did not uphold these aspects of the complaint.

We found that, whilst the council did not have a policy on how meetings should be conducted, it had an accepted practice. This included that the chairperson should read and make reference to previous minutes but recognised that this is not always possible. As the council does not have a policy on this, it was not able to provide Mr C with a copy. We did not uphold this aspect of the complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mr C, his partner and Mrs A for failing to address the concerns raised by Mr C about the previous minutes. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on making an

apology, available at www.spsa.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance.

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.