

## SPSO decision report



**Case:** 201705217, Renfrewshire Council  
**Sector:** local government  
**Subject:** child services and family support  
**Decision:** some upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mr C complained that the council failed to follow a number of social work procedures. Mr C and his wife (Mrs C) had been foster carers; however, following a child protection investigation (CPI) regarding one of the children they cared for, an investigation was carried out and Mr and Mrs C were deregistered as foster carers. Mr C complained that the council failed to follow procedures in relation to the CPI and the deregistration.

We took independent advice from a social worker. We found that, in relation to the CPI procedures, it was unclear as to whether one or two social workers should conduct interviews with children. We also found that the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland was not followed as Mr and Mrs C were not provided with information about the concern at the earliest possibility. There was also not a clear record regarding the risks and benefits of moving the children from the placement. We further found that the CPI took too long to conclude, and that the council did not ensure that Mr and Mrs C were aware of their ability to access independent support and advice throughout the investigation. We upheld this aspect of Mr C's complaint.

In relation to the deregistration, we found that the council had reasonably followed procedures and we did not uphold this aspect of Mr C's complaint. However, we noted that the foster carer agreement documents had not been reviewed or updated throughout Mr and Mrs C's time as foster carers, and we made a recommendation to the council on this matter.

Finally, Mr C complained about the council's handling of his complaint. We found that the council had failed to deal with his complaint in a reasonable manner as timescales were not met, and at various points Mr C was given incorrect information about the complaints process. We upheld this aspect of Mr C's complaint. Given that the council had stated that they were updating the foster carer agreements with a section on complaints, we asked for evidence of this being approved and implemented, but did not make any further recommendations on complaints handling.

### Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mr C for failing to reasonably follow procedures in relation to the child protection investigation; and for failing to reasonably follow procedures in relation to complaints handling. The apology should comply with the SPSO guidelines on making an apology, available at: [www.spsso.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance](http://www.spsso.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance).

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

- It should be clear whether one or two social workers will conduct Child Protection Investigation interviews.
- Actions taken with regards to allegations made in placements should be in line with the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland.

- A clear record should be maintained clarifying both the risks and benefits of ending a placement following an allegation, before a decision is taken.
- CPI's should be completed within a reasonable timeframe.
- The council should ensure that foster carers are made aware of their ability to have access to independent support and advice following an allegation.
- The contents of fostering agreements should be reviewed at intervals by the authorities and any proposed changes or additions explained and discussed with carers.