

SPSO decision report

Case: 201804660, Clackmannanshire Council
Sector: local government
Subject: child services and family support
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained about the council's response to the child protection concerns raised in respect of her child (Child A). The council led a child protection investigation and Mrs C complained about the handling of the investigation, highlighting a number of concerns about the quality of the initial assessment undertaken, the actions taken in response to Child A's disclosure and the level of initial support and follow-up provided to Mrs C and her family.

The council acknowledged that there were some failings in their handling of the child protection investigation and they confirmed that, since the complaint was raised by Mrs C, an external review was conducted and child protection training was delivered to all social work staff. We investigated the complaint further to ensure that all failings were identified and that appropriate learning and improvement was put in place. In doing so, we examined the case records and sought independent advice from an experienced social worker.

We found that the council's case records were of a poor standard and as a result, there was a lack of evidence of the actions taken and the rationale for the decisions made. We also identified that communication with Mrs C and her family was unreasonable. We concluded that the council failed to adhere to the child protection procedures and relevant guidance by failing to ensure that there were two social workers present when Child A was interviewed; to consider the gender appropriateness of the interviewing social worker; to undertake a welfare home visit to Mrs C and Child A; and to consult with health or education prior to undertaking the investigation. We upheld the complaints and made some additional recommendations, including a request for evidence of the actions already taken by the council.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- The council should share the outcome of the review in an appropriate manner that protects any confidential information.

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

- The council should ensure that all staff are aware of the importance of maintaining accurate case records which detail notes of the decisions made and the rationale for them.

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.