

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201903909, Aberdeenshire Council  
**Sector:** Local Government  
**Subject:** child services and family support  
**Decision:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Ms C was concerned about the support they received from the Children and Families Social Work Team regarding concerns about their child (Child A), particularly following Child A running away from the family home. We took independent social work advice. We found that:

social work did not act appropriately on a Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) referral from a GP;

no call was made to a neighbouring social work office to investigate Child A's living situation;

there was no closing summary to explain why it was considered appropriate to close the case to social work;

the social worker in training did not appear to have been regularly supervised by a manager; and

the council's own investigation did not identify the failings in the support provided to Ms C and Child A.

Therefore, we upheld Ms C's complaint.

### Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Ms C and Child A for failing to provide reasonable support. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at [www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets](http://www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets).

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

- Closing summaries should be completed to explain why it is considered appropriate to close a case to social work.
- Social workers in training should receive regular supervision with a manager.
- When a GIRFEC referral is received, the GIRFEC practice model should be implemented and consideration should be given to holding a multi-agency meeting to assess the risk to the child and consider what level of help is required.
- Where a child refuses to return home and chooses to live elsewhere, reasonable efforts should be made to investigate the suitability of that living situation.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- The council's complaints handling system should ensure that failings (and good practice) are identified, and that it is using the learning from complaints to inform service development and improvement (where appropriate).

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.