

SPSO decision report



Case: 202003157, Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership
Sector: Health and Social Care
Subject: Communication / staff attitude
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

C complained on behalf of A (an adult who lives as a tenant in supported accommodation provided by the partnership) about the partnership's communication with A's welfare guardian (B). A, B and C are siblings.

Following incidents between A and other individuals, B emailed A's carers to make a suggestion about A's care. A's carers responded by email and copied their manager into the email for their information. The care manager subsequently emailed the carers to remark on comments they had made to B but accidentally sent a copy to B.

B emailed the care manager shortly after to complain. B considered that the care manager's email instructed A's carers to withhold information about A's care. Neither the care manager, nor the partnership responded to B's email. C subsequently emailed the partnership to complain on B's behalf. C reiterated B's initial complaint. C also complained about the failure to reply to B's email.

In the partnership's response, they did not uphold C's complaint about the contents of the care manager's email. However, they upheld C's complaint about the failure to respond to B's email.

We took independent advice from a social work adviser. We found that the content of the care manager's email was inappropriate. We considered that the email encouraged A's carers to reduce the amount of information provided to B specifically to reduce their feedback about A's care. We also considered that the partnership had failed to adequately investigate B's and C's complaint. Therefore, we upheld these complaints.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to B and C separately for the care manager's inappropriate email and for failing to respond to B's complaint or adequately investigate B's and C's complaints. The partnership should also apologise for providing inaccurate information in its previous apology and for suggesting that it was the responsibility of B and C to ensure that they receive responses to issues they raise. The apologies should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.
- The partnership should investigate if any information about A that should have been shared with B has been withheld and, if so, share this with B.

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

- All complaints should be handled in line with the partnership's complaint handling process.
- Social workers are required to communicate with members of the public in an appropriate, open, accurate and straightforward way.

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.