

SPSO decision report

Case: 202107992, South Lanarkshire Council
Sector: Local Government
Subject: Child protection
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

C is the parent of two children, A and B, who complained about the council's handling of child protection concerns raised in respect of A and B. C is concerned that due to lack of proper procedure, decisions made by the Court in respect of contact between their ex-partner and the children were based on inaccurate information provided in social work reports.

The council's own investigation of the complaint identified that there was inadequate recording of the child protection concerns reported by C and that a welfare report compiled by the social worker was not of an acceptable standard.

We took independent advice from an experienced social work adviser. We found that there were failings to make a verbatim record of the child protection concerns raised by C, that the welfare report prepared for the Court was below an acceptable standard, and that there was a poor record of the interviews conducted with the children. Based on the evidence available, it was agreed that given that the children did not make a further disclosure to the social worker when interviewed, there were no grounds to pursue a child protection investigation. However, on balance, we concluded that, in light of the failings identified, there was a failure in the overall handling of the child protection concerns raised and as such, we upheld this part of C's complaint.

C also complained about the council's handling of their complaint. We found this to be reasonable and did not uphold this part of the complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for failing to conduct their enquiries in a clear and transparent way, failing to keep adequate records of their contacts with C, the child protection concerns reported by C, and of the interviews conducted with the children; and for the poor standard of the welfare report. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.