

## SPSO decision report



**Case:** 201806731, North Lanarkshire Council  
**Sector:** Local Government  
**Subject:** child services and family support  
**Decision:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mrs C complained about the actions of the council. Her grandchild (Child A) had been placed in a kinship care arrangement with their maternal aunt (Mrs C's daughter) and uncle. Child A's father requested that he be allowed full-time care of the child.

A number of assessments were undertaken by the council which resulted in a Safeguarder (someone appointed by a children's hearing to help them make the best decisions for a child or young person) being appointed to gather more information. The Safeguarder issued their report and recommended that Child A be returned to the full-time care of their father. As part of the Safeguarder's investigation, they interviewed a social worker involved in the case. In response to the Safeguarder's questions, the social worker highlighted some concerns about the kinship care placement and the involvement of Child A's maternal family. Mrs C states that she and her family were unaware of these concerns until the Safeguarder's report was issued. Mrs C complained that the council should have raised these concerns directly with the family to allow them to act on them.

We took independent advice from a social worker. We concluded that, regardless of the council's general impression that the kinship carers and maternal family were providing good care, any concerns or issues should be discussed openly and transparently. We also raised concern about the council cancelling and then failing to rearrange appropriate reviews.

We did not consider that the areas the social worker highlighted to the Safeguarder to be minor or insignificant. Therefore, regardless of where Child A's future place of residence would be, it would have been beneficial to discuss these matters openly with the kinship carers and maternal family at the time. This would have meant they could take steps to address any concerns and, if necessary, work with the council to ensure appropriate support was in place. We also recognised that the council's failure to schedule reviews within an appropriate timescale could have contributed to relevant information or concerns not being shared in a timely manner. In light of this, we upheld Mrs C's complaint.

### Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mrs C and the kinship carers for failing to act on or share concerns that were later discussed with a Safeguarder. 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:

- Families involved in kinship care placements should be provided with relevant information regarding any concerns the council has about the placement.
- If there are difficulties in the relationship between the social work department and a service user,

appropriate steps should be taken to resolve these difficulties where possible. This includes ensuring appropriate reviews are held within reasonable time.

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.