

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201900081, Fife Council  
**Sector:** Local Government  
**Subject:** Child services and family support  
**Decision:** some upheld, recommendations

### Summary

C raised a number of concerns about the social work service provided by the council in relation to the contact between their child (A) and A's non-resident parent. At the time of the complaint, the social work service was responsible for managing contact between A and the non-resident parent.

We took independent advice from a social work adviser. C firstly complained about the way the council acted in relation to concerns they raised about what was in A's best interest. We found that the council acted reasonably in relation to a number of the concerns C raised. However, we also found that there was a failure in one instance to carry out a risk assessment timeously. On balance, we upheld C's complaint.

C also complained about the way the council handled a meeting that had been arranged to discuss A's contact arrangements. We did not identify failings in relation to this aspect of C's complaint and we did not uphold the complaint.

Finally, we considered the council's handling of C's complaint. We found that the council's complaint response did not address a number of C's points of complaint and that it failed to include an apology for a service failing the council identified during their own investigation. We made recommendations in relation to complaint handling.

### Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for failing to carry out a risk assessment timeously; for the service failing identified in the council's stage 2 response; and for the issues with complaint handling. 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:

- National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland and the National Framework for Risk Assessment should be followed in relation to assessing risk.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- Under the Local Authority Model Complaints Handling Procedure, an investigation should explore the complaint in more depth and establish all the relevant facts. The aim is to resolve the complaint where possible, or to give the customer a full, objective and proportionate response. Where failings are identified, an apology should be offered.

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.