

SPSO decision report



Case: 202009025, North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership
Sector: Health and Social Care
Subject: Child services and family support
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

C and their partner (B) complained about the actions of the partnership's social work department. B's sibling (A) had been removed from their parents' care. B and C wished to be considered as carers for A, and also requested contact with A. However, they did not have contact with A for several months. C complained that the partnership failed to take appropriate action to facilitate and support contact between A and B during this period. Following contact being initiated, kinship care assessments were carried out and A was placed to reside with B and C.

We took independent social work advice. We noted the partnership's explanation regarding the challenges contact with B potentially posed and the need for A to settle into their placement with foster carers. However, we found that it would have been reasonable to support some contact between A and B during this period. We found that the partnership had not provided a reasonable explanation as to why contact did not take place. We also noted that contact should not have been contingent solely on B's capacity to provide kinship care of A, and we found it unreasonable that contact was only pursued when it was required to progress the kinship assessment. Therefore, we upheld C's complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to B for the failure to facilitate and support contact between B and A. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.

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

- Contact between care-experienced children and their siblings should be promoted where possible, even if this is not straightforward. If there are concerns about potential emotional distress, there should be a focus on how to help children manage this rather than seeking to avoid the contact in the first place.

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.