

SPSO decision report



Case: 202101735, West Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership
Sector: Health and Social Care
Subject: Adoption / fostering
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

C complained about the standard of support provided by the partnership following their adoption of their child. C lived in another partnership area and told us that there had been disagreements between their local social work team and West Lothian which had not been appropriately resolved. They also had concerns in a number of other areas, including a general lack of contact and a failure to provide appropriate support following a disclosure of past abuse by their child.

We took independent advice from a social work adviser. We found that the partnership had not provided a reasonable standard of support. We found that there were failures in the resolution of the disagreements between the partnerships and the support provided following the disclosure of abuse. In addition, we considered that many of the partnership's actions had not been sufficiently recorded and that they failed to handle C's subsequent complaints in an appropriately empathetic manner, given the sensitivity of the issues involved. For these reasons, we upheld C's complaints.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for failing to provide a reasonable level of support, failing to reasonably document their assessments, and failing to reasonably handle C's complaint. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.
- The partnership should review the support being provided to C, to assess and ensure whether current supports are appropriate and sufficient.

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

- A detailed record should be made of any assessments carried out by social workers, explaining and justifying the conclusions reached.
- Following a disclosure of abuse, appropriate support should be identified and provided to meet the needs of the child and any carers.
- Where outside social work agencies are involved and there is a disagreement in approach, the partnership should ensure that this disagreement is resolved before deciding how to proceed.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- When upholding a complaint, an apology should be offered and appropriate steps should be identified and explained to avoid similar failings in future.
- Where complaints are sensitive in nature, complaint responses should be appropriately empathetic, whether or not the complaints are being upheld.

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.