

SPSO decision report

Case: 202209886, Aberdeen City Council
Sector: Local Government
Subject: Primary School
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

C complained that the council and school staff failed to reasonably respond or act when C told them about domestic violence witnessed by their child (A). C said that the council had breached their duty of care and Child Protection obligations in respect of A by ignoring C's concerns about the domestic abuse that they were suffering and failed to provide A with appropriate support.

The council did not uphold C's complaint. They considered that C and their family had received an appropriate level of support in line with the council's policies and procedures.

We took independent advice from a social worker. We found that there was a failure by school staff to reasonably respond to, or act upon, C's reports of domestic violence witnessed by A. We found that staff should have contacted the council's Joint Child Protection Team for advice and guidance following C's initial disclosure of domestic abuse. Therefore, we upheld C's complaint.

We also identified a concern that council staff may not fully recognise what constitutes domestic violence. It encompasses more than just physical violence and includes a range of behaviour as outlined in relevant legislation. We provided the council with feedback on this point.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for the failings identified. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.

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.