

SPSO decision report



Case: 202301380, The City of Edinburgh Council
Sector: Local Government
Subject: Adoption / Fostering
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

C complained about the council's social work service during the pre-adoptive process of their child (A). C complained about the council's decision to temporarily suspend A's nursery placement and about the council's communication of their decision. C complained that the council failed to have an appropriate level of contact with A during the pre-adoptive process, and that the council failed to reasonably prepare and submit a report which is required from an adoption agency for court, regarding the suitability of the prospective adoptive parents.

The council apologised for failing to communicate information about A's suspended nursery placement at a time when open and honest communication could take place.

We took independent advice from a social worker with experience in fostering and adoption. We found that the council's decision to temporarily suspend A's nursery placement was made without consultation with A's pre-adoptive carers or nursery, who should have been part of the decision-making process. We upheld this point of C's complaint. We found the council's social work visits to A did not meet the frequency or timing set out in the council's policy or legislation. We upheld this point of C's complaint. We found the council prepared and submitted the required report within the statutory timescale and reasonably communicated with C about the report. We did not uphold this point of C's complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to the complainant for the failings identified by this investigation. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/meaningful-apologies.

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

- Social workers should visit children in pre-adoptive placements in line with their statutory requirements as per the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009, and the council's procedure.
- The social work department should appropriately consult with key partners in pre-adoptive placements (such as carers and nursery) on decisions related to a child's care, and communication with partners should be timely.

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.