

SPSO decision report

Case: 202302815, East Dunbartonshire Council
Sector: Local Government
Subject: Child services and family support
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

C complained about the process around a Looked After and Accommodated Child (LAAC) review meeting for their child (A) and the decision taken to end A's residential placement.

We took independent advice from a social worker. We found that the decision making was based on an appropriate needs assessment and that it was reasonable for the council to consider Self-Directed Support (SDS) options for respite, rather than continuing to fund a full time residential placement that A did not need. However, neither the assessment nor the LAAC review specified what form of respite was considered appropriate for A and why. It should have been made clear to A and C that overnight residential support was no longer required and why external agency respite options were not appropriate.

We also found no evidence that the draft assessment was shared with A and C for their comments, and no record of discussion with the parents about the respite options prior to or at the LAAC review meeting. It was not clear how the council concluded SDS was in A's best interests, or that this had been properly communicated to or discussed with C.

We upheld C's complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for the shortcomings identified in this investigation. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.
- Provide C with an explanation in respect of external respite options, and why they were considered unsuitable for A.

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

- Key decisions and changes need to be properly documented, explained and communicated. In complex cases such as A's, case supervision sessions should go over in some detail communication with parents – what information has been shared, what explanations given about actions taken / decisions or recommendations made. LAAC meetings and minutes should detail how best interest decisions were made.

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.