

SPSO decision report



Case: 202306940, Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership
Sector: Health and Social Care
Subject: Adult support and protection / adults with incapacity
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

C complained about the social work assessment of their adult child (A). A had fragile-X syndrome (a genetic condition that causes a range of developmental issues), which affected them in a variety of ways. A's long-standing care worker had retired and A was experiencing difficulties which were putting them and their family at risk. C believed that unreasonable assumptions were made about A's ability to function independently because of the level of support their family provided for them.

A had been referred for assessment by a psychologist and the partnership's social work department. A was assessed by social workers as not eligible for support. C challenged this, because A's psychology assessment recommended that they receive support. The partnership refused to alter their decision, saying that the psychology report was inappropriately worded, and that they would seek to have it reworded. C complained to the SPSO that this was unacceptable and that the partnership had failed to handle their complaint properly.

We took independent advice from a registered social worker. We found that the assessment of A by social workers was reasonable. We did not uphold this aspect of the complaint.

Although the partnership wrote to C saying that they would seek to have the wording of A's psychological assessment reworded or redacted, there was no evidence that they had asked for this. We found that the psychological assessment was inappropriately worded, as A's eligibility for support could only be assessed by social workers. Social work raised reasonable concerns about this with the psychology team. We found that C's complaint was handled unreasonably, as the partnership failed to discuss it with C, and consequently did not address all the points of concern C wished to raise. We upheld the complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for failing to contact them about their complaint, to clarify the points of concern and the outcomes being sought. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- Complaint responses should consider and respond fully to the issues raised in accordance with The Model Complaints Handling Procedure. They should consider any relevant national or local guidance in both the investigation and response and identify and action learning.

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.