

Education, Children and Families Committee

10 am Tuesday 10 December 2013

Recommendations of the Social Work Complaints Review Committee – 10 October 2013

Item number 8.5.1
Report number
Wards

Links

Coalition pledges	P1 – Increase support for vulnerable children, including help for families so that fewer go into care.
Council outcomes	CO1 – Our children have the best start in life, are able to make and sustain relationships and are ready to succeed. CO3 – Our children and young people at risk, or with a disability, have improved life chances. CO11 – Preventative and personalised support in place.
Single Outcome Agreement	SO3 – Edinburgh’s children and young people enjoy their childhood and fulfil their potential.

Fred Downie

Chair, Social Work Complaints Review Committee

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Terms of Referral

The Social Work Complaints Review Committee has referred its recommendations on an individual complaint against the Children and Families Department to the Committee for consideration

- 1 Complaints Review Committees (CRCs) are established under the Social Work (Representations) procedures (Scotland) Directions 1996 as the final stage of a comprehensive Client Complaints system. They require to be objective and independent in their review of responses to complaints. All members of the CRC are independent of the local authority.
- 2 The CRC met in private on 10 October 2013 to consider a complaint against the Education, Children and Families Department. The meeting was chaired by Fred Downie. The other Committee members present were Val Tudball and Linda Veitch. The complainant and Department representatives attended throughout.
- 3 The complaint centred around the deteriorating relationship between the complainant and the Social Worker allocated to the family by the Council. The complainant alleged that the Social Worker was unprofessional, rude, lacked respect and that he talked down to her. She felt that the Social Worker was unwilling to assist her and her family and that he had been inaccurately reflecting her family's situation to other agencies involved with her and to the Children's Hearing.
- 5 The complainant believed that the Senior Social Work Management Team had not accepted her concerns and had failed to allocate an alternative Social Worker which was contributing to additional stress within her family.
- 6 The investigating officer advised that Council staff had met on several occasions with the complainer to consider her concerns and to try and resolve them but that the best interests of the complainer's children were of primary concern to staff. The Council had previously agreed to a change of Social Worker for the complainant but had felt it was not appropriate for a second time and that any further change would not be beneficial to the children.

- 7 The members of the Committee, the complainant and the investigating officers were given the opportunity to ask questions.
- 8 The investigating officer said the Council had tried to act in the best interests of the children and had made its decisions based on the information available at the time.
- 9 Following this the complainant and the investigating officers withdrew from the meeting.

For decision / action

- 10 The Social Work Complaints Review Committee agreed as follows:
 - 10.1 That the complaint be not upheld for the following reasons:
 - 10.1.1 That, due to the complex family situation, the Committee did not consider that a change of Social Worker would be advantageous to the children at this time.
 - 10.1.2 The Committee recognised the difficult relationship between the family and the Social Worker and expressed the view that Social Work management would take cognisance of this.
 - 10.2 The Committee recommended to the Education, Children and Families Committee that a Child Protection Core Group meeting be convened as soon as possible to assist the family move forward.

Background reading / external references

Agenda and confidential papers and minutes for the Complaints Review Committee of 10 October 2013.