

# Education, Children and Families Committee

10 am Tuesday 4 March 2014

## Recommendations of the Social Work Complaints Review Committee – 19 December 2013

Item number 8.2  
Report number  
Wards

### Links

<b>Coalition pledges</b>	P1 – Increase support for vulnerable children, including help for families so that fewer go into care.
<b>Council outcomes</b>	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.
<b>Single Outcome Agreement</b>	SO3 – Edinburgh’s children and young people enjoy their childhood and fulfil their potential.

### Donald Ness

Chair, Social Work Complaints Review Committee

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### Terms of Referral

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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 19 December 2013 to consider a complaint against the Children and Families Department. The meeting was chaired by Donald Ness. The other Committee members present were Val Tudball and Linda Veitch. The complainant, representatives and Department representatives attended throughout.
- 3 The complainant was dissatisfied that his complaint against the Children and Families Department had not been fully resolved, that further complaints were not taken seriously, that both Social Work staff and Social Work Advice and Complaints Services had acted unprofessionally and suppressed the truth and that the Children and Families Department had not helped to safeguard his son.
- 4 The complainant felt that that information provided by his social worker contained errors and made assumptions about his lifestyle which had then been referred on to the Criminal Justice team involved in his case. He also felt that this information had been used to influence decisions made by the Childrens Panel. He expressed concerns relating to his allocated social worker and the support he had been offered together with concerns relating to the unsupervised contact that his son had been having with his maternal grandparents. He had asked for a change in social worker and requested supervised contact for his son with his maternal grandparents.
- 5 The complainant expressed concern about the way in which visits and meetings were recorded and in particular, the details of a meeting with his Social Worker

which had been held on 23 August 2013 had not been entered into the Council's Swift system until 18 September 2013.

- 6 The investigating officer explained that concerns had been raised in relation to the complainant's son's visits with his maternal grandparents and following a hearing by the Children's Panel it had been agreed that the complainant's son be allowed supervised visits with his maternal grandparents. The Department had apologised to the complainant for the confusion regarding the supervised visits and confirmed that it had not intended to suggest that the complainant was opposed to all contact with the maternal grandparents.
- 7 She further indicated that a new Social Worker had been allocated to the complainant at an appropriate time for the family, when a staff member in a new practice team became available and appropriate transfer and introduction arrangements were made.
- 8 The members of the Committee, the complainant and the Investigating Officers were given the opportunity to ask questions.
- 9 Following this, the complainant and the Investigating Officers withdrew from the meeting.

### **For decision / action**

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- 10 The Social Work Complaints Review Committee agreed as follows:
  - 1) In relation to the accuracy of Criminal Justice records as mentioned in the local MP's letter of 18 September 2012, the Committee noted that the, Advice and Complaints Officer had offered to meet with the complainant to discuss the contents of the records.
  - 2) To not uphold the complaint regarding the information provided by the Council to the Children's Panel regarding supervised access and note that the matter had now been resolved.
  - 3) To note the complainant's concerns regarding the delays in updating records to the SWIFT system

### **Background reading / external references**

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Agenda and confidential papers and minutes for the Complaints Review Committee of 19 December 2013.