

Education, Children and Families Committee

10am Tuesday 1 March 2016

Recommendations of the Social Work Complaints Review Committee of 15 December 2015

Item number	8.7.1
Report number	
Wards	All

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Recommendations of the Social Work Complaints Review Committee 15 December 2015

Summary

To refer to the Education, Children and Families Committee recommendations of the Social Work Complaints Review Committee on consideration of a complaint against the social work service within Children and Families.

For decision/action

The Social Work Complaints Review Committee has referred its recommendations on an individual complaint against the social work service within Children and Families to the Committee for consideration.

Main report

- 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.
- 2 The CRC met in private on 15 December 2015 to consider a complaint against the social work service within Children and Families. The complainant and the service representatives attended throughout.
- 3 The complaint comprised the following 3 main points:
 - i) that the social worker allocated to her children had demonstrated cultural insensitivity towards the complainant;
 - ii) that the social worker was patronising towards the complainant in her dealings with her; and
 - iii) that the social worker was guilty of maladministration on several occasions and that she did not follow the Council's procedures.
- 4 The complainant, supported by her representative, stated that she believed the social worker had failed to provide the level of service which her family should have been able to access. She stated that the social worker had failed to arrange meetings in surroundings conducive to any kind of natural interchange between herself and her children and that when meetings had taken place they were cut short without her being informed in advance.

- 5 The complainant also felt that the social worker had not made any attempt to take account of cultural differences in her dealings with the family. The complainant felt that this had contributed to her failing to help bring the family back together.
- 6 The complainant stated that in her opinion the social worker was guilty of maladministration on several occasions and that she did not follow the Council's procedures. Minutes of child protection conferences had not been received by the complainant and changes to times and dates of meetings had not been communicated effectively to her.
- 7 Members of the Committee and the Investigating Officer were given the opportunity to ask questions.
- 8 The Investigating Officer advised that the Children and Families service had become involved with the complainant's children because of child protection concerns.
- 9 The complainant believed that the role of the social work service was to support a successful reconciliation for her and re-integration back into the family. The primary role of the social work service was to work on a plan to ensure that the children were safe. The complainant had her own support through the Willow Project which was jointly funded by the Council and NHS Lothian.
- 10 The Investigating Officer advised that there were clear established interagency processes which had to be followed in child protection and agreed plans. Social workers did not work alone but as part of a multi agency approach. There were also supervised by a Team Leader who would have an overview of planning and would support the allocated worker in their approach.
- 11 The Investigating Officer stated that the Council had acted in the best interests of the complainant's children, that Council staff had acted in accordance with their legal duties, following correct procedures and acted in a respectful way towards the complainant.
- 12 Members of the Committee and the complainant were given the opportunity to ask questions.
- 13 Following this, the complainant, their representatives and the Investigating Officer withdrew from the meeting.

Recommendations

- 14 After full consideration of the complaint the Committee reached the following decisions/recommendations:
 - 1) The complaint detailed at Point 2.1 of the report by the Director of Children and Families was **not upheld**.

The Committee agreed that the Social Worker had acted in the best interests of the children and that there was no evidence presented at the meeting that the Social Worker had demonstrated any cultural insensitivity.

- 2) The complaint detailed at Point 2.2 of the report by the Director of Children and Families was **not upheld**.

The Committee agreed that, from all the evidence presented at the meeting, that the Social Worker had acted appropriately and in accordance with her legal duties.

- 3) The complaint detailed at Point 2.3 of the report by the Director of Children and Families was **not upheld**.

The Committee agreed that the Social Worker had followed the Council's procedures correctly.

The Committee also noted that the Social Worker works as part of a team with a Team Leader and a Practice Team Manager supervising her working practices. The Committee recognised that it was the responsibility of the statutory minute taker at Child Protection meetings to ensure minutes of those meetings were circulated.

The Committee welcomed the offer from the Advice and Complaints Officer present at the meeting to investigate the process in place around this issue with a view to making any improvements as necessary.

Background reading/external references

Agenda, confidential papers and minutes for the Social Work Complaints Review Committee of 15 December 2015

Links

Coalition pledges

Council outcomes CO3 Our children and young people at risk, or with a disability, have improved life chances

Single Outcome Agreement SO2 Edinburgh's citizens experience improved health and wellbeing, with reduced inequalities in health

Appendices None