

Education, Children and Families Committee

10am Tuesday 12 December 2017

Recommendations of the Social Work Complaints Review Committee of 20 October 2017

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Wards	All
Executive/Routine	
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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 the Communities and Families Directorate.

For decision/action

The Social Work Complaints Review Committee has referred its recommendations on complaints against the social work service within Communities 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 are required to be objective and independent in their review of responses to complaints.
- 2 The CRC met in private on 20 October 2017 to consider a complaint against the social work service within Communities and Families. The complainant and the service representative attended throughout.
- 3 The complainant remained dissatisfied with the Council's response to complaints about supervised contact between him and his son.
- 4 The complaint comprised the following main points:
 - i) there were inconsistencies and inaccuracies in a social work report prepared for a children's hearing, and
 - ii) the social worker who attended a supervised visit had behaved inappropriately, calling into question his parenting skills, and behaving in a culturally insensitive way
- 5 The complainant suggested that the interventions by the social worker during the supervised visit, while not in themselves central to his complaint, were typical of a level of cultural insensitivity he had experienced from social work and other staff.
- 6 He referred, in particular, to references to the prayer area within his house, which he thought had received undue attention within formal reports. There had also been a health visitor statement to the Children's Hearing which indicated he could be offensive and aggressive towards his son, which he denied.

- 7 Members of the Committee and the Investigating Officer were then given the opportunity to ask questions of the complainant.
- 8 The Investigating Officer then confirmed that it was normal for supervision reports to Children's Hearings to include an assessment of the home environment. She disagreed that any reference to a prayer area must be disparaging, instead contending that signs of a commitment to a belief system were positive indications.
- 9 She was unable to confirm the specific comments by the health visitor in the report to the Children's Panel, but indicated that often such reports were presented separately from the social work assessment.
- 10 Finally, she noted that much of the complainant's concerns related to decisions taken at Children's Hearings. She understood that the complainant hadn't attended recent review Hearings, and encouraged him to re-engage with the Hearings process.
- 11 Members of the Committee and the complainant were then given the opportunity to ask questions of the Investigating Officer.
- 12 Following this, the complainant and the Investigating Officer withdrew from the meeting to allow the Committee to deliberate in private.

Recommendations

After full consideration of the complaints the Committee reached the following decisions/recommendations:

- 1) To note that the Committee had no remit for supervisory or other decisions made by the Children's Panel, and encouraged the complainant to re-engage with the Panel process and also social work services.
- 2) To note that it had therefore been at times difficult for the Committee to focus purely on the social work elements of the complaint.
- 3) To partially **uphold** the complaint about inaccuracies in the social work report to the Children's Panel.

The Committee was not reassured that the allegations about inaccuracies in the report had been fully explored by senior staff. To therefore recommend that internal complaints investigation processes were reviewed accordingly.

- 4) **Not to uphold** the complaint about alleged incidents during supervised visits.
The Committee saw no evidence of a breach of professional practice.
- 5) **Not to uphold** allegations about cultural insensitivities in the social work support to the complainant and his son.

While the Committee heard evidence of the reporting distinct cultural practice, it did not consider this amounted to discrimination or breach of professional practice.

Background reading/external references

Agenda, confidential papers and minute of the Complaints Review Committee of 20 October 2017.

Appendix

None.