

## STIRLING COUNCIL

**MINUTES of MEETING of the SOCIAL WORK COMPLAINTS REVIEW PANEL held in the DRUMMOND ROOM, OLD VIEWFORTH, STIRLING on MONDAY 30 APRIL 2012 at 2.30 pm**

### **Present**

Professor Kirstein Rummery (Chair)

Councillor Neil BENNY

Councillor Paul OWENS

### **In Attendance**

Peter Farquhar, Principal Solicitor, Governance  
Jean Houston, Committee Officer, Governance (Clerk)

**The Panel resolved that under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.**

### **CR5. HEARING OF COMPLAINT AGAINST SOCIAL WORK SERVICES**

Members of the Panel had before them a complaint against the Social Care Service (Social Work).

The Complainant, Dr C, was present at the hearing and accompanied by her brother, Mr C. They were appointed Joint Guardians of their brother, SC, and representing the original complainants, Mr & Mrs C. Also present, representing the Authority, were Deirdre Cilliers (Chief Social Work Officer), Maureen Dryden (Service Manager, Adult Assessment & Care Management), Joe Lally (Adult Support & Protection Lead Officer), Mario Valerio (Team Manager - Mental Health and Learning Disability), Gavin Burt (Complaints Officer) and Jane Larner (Solicitor).

The Chair invited Members of the Panel, Officers, the Complainant and representatives of the Authority to introduce themselves. She then outlined the procedures to be followed.

The Chair confirmed that, at the request of the Complainant, pages 27-30 (Appendix 1 of papers submitted by Social Care) had been struck from the record.

Dr C was asked to outline her complaint to the Panel.

Panel Members and the Authority's representatives were given the opportunity to ask questions of the Complainant.

Gavin Burt made an introductory statement on behalf of the Authority.

Panel Members and the Complainant were given the opportunity to ask questions, following which both sides were asked to sum up their case.

The Complainant, her brother and the Authority's representatives left the meeting to allow Members of the Panel to consider the information presented. After 20 minutes, these individuals were invited back to the meeting to be informed of the Panel's decision.

### **Decision**

The Panel agreed that the complaint had been thoroughly investigated according to the proper procedures.

However, the Service admitted that mistakes had been made and it was keen to learn from these mistakes. Moreover, the Panel acknowledged that this had not been clearly communicated to the family in the meetings that had taken place and letters that had been sent to the family.

The Panel therefore recommended that:

1. the Service issue a written, collective apology to the family. This apology should clearly indicate where mistakes were made, and what would be done to rectify them. It should address issues of both processes and personal actions. It should also contain an explicit acknowledgement of, and apology for, the harm and distress caused to SC and to the family as a result of the actions (and failure to act) on the part of the Service;
2. the Service should review its actions in the case and make recommendations for further action in the following areas:
  - a. the need for further training, particularly around Adult Support and Protection legislation and procedures, and around effective and timely communication with users and families;
  - b. the need to review communications so that the content and language at all levels should be clear and understandable to families; that apologies should not be deflected outwards, but should be unconditional and sincere; that if information cannot be shared, an explanation of why this cannot happen is given; and that families are kept informed of all actions or lack of actions without delay;
  - c. the need for more effective information systems and sharing between different parts of the Service, between the Service and external agencies, and between the Service and families of vulnerable adults, particularly with regards to Adults Support and Protection issues.
3. that the Service should have due regard to repairing its relationship with SC and his family, particularly his parents;
4. that the Chief Social Work Officer should personally review progress made in these areas in six months' time and report this to Mr and Mrs C

The Chair declared the Meeting closed at 4.30pm

.....