

STIRLING COUNCIL

MINUTES of MEETING of the SOCIAL WORK COMPLAINTS REVIEW PANEL held in the BRUCE ROOM, OLD VIEWFORTH, STIRLING on FRIDAY 30 JANUARY 2015 at 10.00AM

Present

Professor Kirstein RUMMERY (Chair)

Councillor Margaret BRISLEY

Councillor Jim THOMSON

In Attendance

Peter Farquhar, Solicitor, Corporate Operations

Jean Houston, Committee Officer, Corporate Operations (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 Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

CR11 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, Mrs M, was present at the hearing and accompanied by Mr L. Also present, representing the Authority, were Liam Purdie, Assistant Head of Social Services; Gavin Burt, Social Work Complaints Officer; and John O'Donnell, Social Work Complaints Officer.

The Chair asked that round table introductions were made and then outlined the procedures to be followed.

Mrs M and Mr L were asked to outline Mrs M's complaint to the Panel. It was noted that the Complainant had asked 6 officers from Education and Social Services to attend, and that none had done so.

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

The Assistant Head of Social Services presented the case for 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 and the Authority's representatives left the meeting at 11.55am to allow Members of the Panel to consider the information presented. At 12.45pm, these individuals were invited back to the meeting to be informed of the Panel's decision.

Decision

The Panel wished to make it clear that it could only reach any decision based upon the reports and submissions presented to it. For this reason, the Panel could not arrive at a view on whether the Social Work Team Manager had been 'unprofessional, rude and intimidating' at the meeting held on 14 March 2014.

The Panel made the following decisions and recommendations:

1. that the Service had throughout the process communicated very poorly with the complainant, including the way that the meeting had been organised, conducted, recorded and any decisions communicated and this had caused significant distress to the Complainant. The Panel would like the Service to acknowledge formally the distress caused and thought that the family was due an apology for the poor communications and delays in the process; and
2. that the Service should review procedures, in particular with regard to arrangements for large, inter-disciplinary meetings, so that when decisions are made resulting in any change to services provided, these changes are not implemented until the family is informed in writing, to avoid any misunderstanding.

The Panel noted the concerns raised by the Complainant in connection with the Social Work Team Manager involved in the case not having complied with the SSSC Codes of Practice or the Law, however the Panel was unable to make specific recommendations on this matter.

The Panel commented that it thought that Social Services and Education Service should conduct a review of GIRFEC (Getting It Right For Every Child) practices to ensure that there was seamless, integrated service provision.

The Chair declared the Meeting closed at 1.00 pm