

Children's Social Services

Summary of complaints by theme (2022-23)

Complaints relating to contact arrangements

X complained about why contact had been changed to supervised from unsupervised without a reason, as well as other issues with contact arrangements in general.

We have been clear previously there will be no changes to contact with X's son until the ongoing adoption process regarding X's daughter has ended, and X has some time to adjust, acknowledging their feelings and emotions. We have concerns about X's presentation since the final decision was made in respect of daughter, with X being more emotional and aggressive which raises concerns further. X hasn't completed some pieces of work that would help evidence she is working with professionals to develop herself and this furthers our own concerns. We reminded X of the significant emotional harm her anger posed meaning we had to protect their children. No changes will be made to contact with X's son and we clearly set out our expectations for X to work with us in terms of progression.

Complaints relating to communication

X complained we had shared incorrect information with Health about previous domestic abuse allegations and that X hadn't been informed of the outcome of recent S47 enquiries.

We had not given incorrect information to Health about previous domestic violence incidents as we received referrals from Health quoting such information. This will be evidenced when X's Individual Rights Request is processed and relevant records shared. X has previously been informed but reminded of the outcome of the Section 47 child protection investigation. The claims in the referrals were unsubstantiated and no further action required.

Complaints relating to a lack of advice or support

X complained their daughter's case had been allocated to a Children's Services Assistant (C.S.A.) and not a Social Worker. X also complained about not being offered respite and a lack of overall progress with their daughter's case. X wanted to access a local venue for daughter's support.

We explained to X her daughter does not require the support of a designated Social Worker as she is a settled young woman who remains fully supported at home. There

are no immediate concerns in relation to the care daughter receives. The C.S.A. is professional and knowledgeable with experience of working with young people with a learning disability. Respite facilities are difficult to source currently both within Flintshire and nationally. We offered a family group meeting where we can look at options within the external family for support. With regard to daughter attending a local venue via the direct payment, then a referral to Panel will be made. Additionally a three week package of support has been agreed by for the Summer of Fun scheme at Theatre Clwyd.

Complaints relating to disagreements with our decisions or actions

X complained about the small increase in fostering allowances that don't cover daily living costs for the children they look after, and the delay in the increases being implemented.

We acknowledged the financial pressures everyone is facing with growing bills and costs of living. The financial and associated support is considered to be an exceptional package and one in which we have responded over the last few years from house adaptations, vehicle ownership with petrol costs, and additional leisure/ social fees combined with the relief in council tax fee of 50%. The additional fees received is also very generous and reflects a salary which was part of X's original request. The level of allowance is set by Welsh Government and will be reviewed in due course. It is not within our discretion to alter this allowance, but we can provide discrete services to look at income and expenditure and general fostering household budget commitments.

Complaints relating to process

X complained their daughter is currently on the child protection register and should be visited every 10 days in another Local Authority as per the child protection plan. This has not been adhered to by ourselves and instead we recently sent a Social Worker from the Local Authority where daughter resides to visit. X wants the case transferred to the Local Authority where their daughter resides.

We acknowledged X's concerns about the lack of face to face visits, which has been discussed with the allocated Social Worker. As the plan is for the case to transfer to another Local Authority following the private proceedings, we requested that the Local Authority where daughter lives undertake a visit. There was also an unsuccessful attempt a visit the placement which we have addressed and apologised for. We have offered mediation between both sets of parents to discuss the difficulties and to move forwards. The Social Worker will continue with the case and their statutory visits in the meantime.

Complaints relating to fostering

X complained about the lack of communication and consultation during their transition from foster carers to 'When I'm Ready' carer, and the level of confusion caused.

We sought to begin 'When I'm Ready' work with X when the young person they look after reached the age of 16 years a couple of years ago, but X struggled to progress this as they were resistant to engage. We provided training on 'When I'm Training'. Information was also available during Looked After Reviews and within the foster carer handbook. 'When I'm Ready' means payments are only made when the young person returns home from university etc. but we need to be notified in advance. We reminded X they had received some payments post-18 prior to the young person starting university. We can consider backdated payments, but we will need the dates and clear evidence of such returns home from university.

Complaints made by young people

X complained they weren't placed in a residential home at an earlier age. X was placed with several different carers instead. Following a recent holiday abroad to visit family their paperwork returning to the U.K. wasn't correct meaning X had to stay outside the country for several weeks without a support network, and this impacted upon their relationship with their father.

We explained that placing young people in residential care is a last resort and we believed at the time a foster placement was most appropriate for her and would thrive living in a family unit. X's parents also declined long term foster care so short term foster care was considered the best option. It is true that X has been placed in care multiple times and this would never have been our intention at the time, but the changes happened because of a range of factors including foster carers having a personal emergency, X not being happy or respecting the arrangements put in place by the foster carers, and unfortunate breakdowns in relationships. X's mother advised us we had the correct paperwork for X and we trusted her as it had been used previously and worked. X's mother didn't share the paperwork with us until the day before travelling. We believe X had a good support network whilst on holiday and visiting their family.