

Children's Social Services

Summary of complaints by theme (2022-23)

Complaints relating to contact

X complained why contact had been reduced and changed, and they weren't aware of the plans for the children.

We reminded X why telephone contact had been reduced because of their own erratic behaviour and making promises to the children which they didn't keep. We reassured X the children's contact with their sister remained the same as previously. X missed the last review as they were away on holiday but knows the plan for the children, but X was reminded again what the plan was.

Complaints relating to communication

X complained we weren't listening to them, that we had formed our own opinion of them, X was not given updates and we could be difficult to reach. We had also asked X's partner to leave the home when there was no risk posed by them.

We did not agree with X's view and explained the role of the Social Worker was to access the information shared by the Police and formulate the risks and needs of the family members involved. All messages during the week were responded to. We are listening to X's views but balance these against our concerns for their daughter. We reminded X why their partner had been asked to leave the home given the Police referral and our ongoing concerns.

Complaints relating to a lack of advice or support

X complained they weren't listened to at Conference a year ago. Their children were placed on the Register last year but during that time and since, they have received no support.

We did not share X's views. Conference minutes record X participated and shared her views at the meeting. We reminded X that after the children were de-registered X was of the view the family no longer needed support and disengaged with services.

Complaints relating to disagreements with our decisions or actions

X complained that we weren't impartial in terms of their son's case and we took their ex-partner's side on issues such as contact. X also complained we hadn't addressed a safeguarding concern they had raised.

We explained our actions about X's safeguarding concern and that there is a consistent view that the events do not meet safeguarding thresholds. Police also visited. We will work with X about how their son is supported by all parties so that there is consistency in supporting and reassuring him. We will meet again with X and her family to explore how their son can be supported collectively. The Social Worker won't be changed as she has a positive and appropriate relationship with X's son, and there are high levels of review and management oversight.

Complaints relating to staff

X complained they weren't given the opportunity to share their views at a mediation meeting and that it was poorly chaired.

We reminded X that the Mediator had met separately with both parents before the main meeting. They were both given the opportunity to contribute within the Mediation session and the Mediator supported exploring different options for moving forward. However it is entirely up to the parties involved whether they are willing to negotiate and reach an agreement with each other, with the support of the Mediator, and unfortunately an agreement cannot always be reached. We offered to hold another session with a different Mediator.

Complaints relating to process

X complained we were encouraging them to pick up their children for contact as X would be in breach of bail conditions and likely place them on remand. X said they are banned from attending core group meetings and they never receive minutes or updates about the children.

We reminded X that their bail conditions ended some time ago so he could collect the children if a third party was present. X is not banned from attending meetings and we send copies of minutes etc. to the family home.

Complaints relating to foster placements

X complained their foster placement was supposed to be anonymous but after being asked against their wishes to transport a young person to contact, the placement's anonymity may have been breached as family members saw X and the car X drives).

We agreed that X will not transport for contact in the future. X was indeed asked to transport but they could have said no and this was made quite clear to them at the time. However supporting contact with transport is something we expect carers to do, if safe, as it is in the best interest of the children. Family support/contact team have worked hard to maintain X's anonymity. However the young person looked after is of an age where she can disclose her address with her parents.

Complaints made by young people

X questioned why we intervened with their parent when parent was drunk, that X's contact now had to be supervised, that X wasn't in control of their own life and they felt they were spoken with unprofessionally.

We spoke with X and had a positive and lengthy discussion about contact and parent's drinking as well among a number of ongoing matters. It appears that X's parent may have misunderstood some of the points raised in the Schedule of Expectations, particularly around their drinking. X was also reassured that if contact is successful the next couple of occasions we would look at going back to unsupervised contact and X was satisfied with that approach.