

Children's Social Services

Summary of complaints by theme (2023-24)

Complaints made by young people

X complained we didn't properly reflect their views and wishes at a recent Review Meeting, and she wanted someone who would listen to her and not side with the decisions we made.

We were sorry that X had lost faith with her Independent Reviewing Officer and did not trust her. We had offered to meet with X along with her Advocate to discuss this issue but X did not want to agree to this at the time, which is her choice. We are taking her concerns seriously and have had several discussions and communications with her Advocate discussing the best way forward. X's Advocate will speak with her and agree a plan to improve the current situation. X subsequently decided to withdraw her complaint and wanted to move on.

Complaints relating to fostering

X believes there is a conflict of interest with their present Social Worker as she oversees X's case, as well as birth family and grandmother.

In terms of their Social Worker supporting them and completing an assessment with birth family, we explained this is normal practice. Whilst supporting them the Social Worker has gained a good understanding of the case, has developed a positive relationship with the children and understands their needs. For continuity purposes, we would always attempt to allocate a kinship assessment to a Social Worker who has this background information. This involves working closely with foster carers and birth family.

Complaints relating to a lack of advice or support

X queried what exactly his direct payment could be used for as Panel had turned down his previous suggestion and why Panel had turned down an extra night of respite for Y.

We reminded X what direct payments could be used for in terms of meeting Y's needs, and what wouldn't be appropriate. Panel did not authorise the change of use of direct payments to pay for activities as this would not contribute to some of the outcomes specified in Y's plan and some of the activities are low/no cost e.g. going to the beach, museums, walks in the woods and therefore require no funding. In terms of an additional night's respite this was deferred to obtain additional information on X's medical condition (and the impact this condition has on X's caring responsibility). If X clarifies his health needs Panel can determine the effect on his duties and role as carer.

Complaints relating to disagreements with our decisions or actions

X had been told by ourselves to leave the family home. Police have told him there is no further action to be taken with the case. No parenting or risk assessment has been completed with X by Social Services. However, he has been given no reason as to why he has to leave the home or an explanation as to what is needed to return there, so he doesn't agree with our decision.

Due to confidentiality, the need to protect the privacy of the family concerned and that X doesn't have parental responsibility for the children concerned, we were limited in terms of what we could say. He has been asked to leave the home as he is not on the tenancy and he has been advised to present as homeless to Flintshire's Housing Department. We will be entering into legal proceedings in the meantime. This is all we can say on the matter as any Social Services' involvement is between ourselves and the mother.

Complaints relating to process

X complained that because of his mistrust of us he wanted to record our discussions, but we were not allowing him to do so. We had also set off a panic alarm when he attended the office recently and we had shared details about his visit with his ex-partner.

X has not asked to record any sessions. It has been explained to him he would need consent from the person being recorded but from a Local Authority perspective we would not consent to recording a meeting involving a member of staff. There was no panic alarm – it was the routine test fire alarm that went off. X left the building the moment it sounded and we tried to get back in touch with him, apologising we hadn't explained about the test. We have not shared any information about visits etc with his ex-partner.

Complaints relating to communication

X complained we weren't taking her concerns seriously enough about Y's grandmother kicking her, grabbing her arm and swearing at her.

X has a different view but we do treat her concerns seriously and they are looked into each time. However we can find no evidence to support such concerns. Y is well looked after by her grandmother and she attends school, who have raised no concerns. We were also trying to convey valuable advice to X and we apologised if it was miscommunicated or perceived differently. There is nothing stopping Y returning to live with X. There are no Court Orders and the present living arrangement is private between X and Y's grandmother.

Staff

X complained we didn't return her calls or communicate properly with her, and X's daughter struggles with her Social Worker as she can be quite loud etc.

We explained we were not always able to respond to every email sent given their frequency and the need to manage our caseload of other families in need. We do, however, aim to respond to the important emails X sends. We were sorry if the Social Worker came across as loud which impacted on anxieties and she will be mindful in future of toning it down.