

The Independent Foster Care Panel Review

Case IPR4

Case Summary

1. This case concerns a [REDACTED] year old male called [REDACTED] who was a friend [REDACTED] of Mr and Mrs IPR4 [REDACTED]
2. In September 2013 [REDACTED] brought [REDACTED] back to their home as he appeared to be 'homeless' [REDACTED]. From that point, [REDACTED] lived with the IPR4 family.
3. Mrs IPR4 was rightly going to refer this issue to NCC, however, the Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) attached to the school contacted them about [REDACTED] and in the event it was agreed that she would refer the situation to NCC. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
4. Mr and Mrs IPR4 provided in full for [REDACTED] from the point he moved in and on an ad-hoc basis before this.
5. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
6. This situation was incorrectly categorised by NCC as a private fostering arrangement.
7. Mr and Mrs IPR4 rightly complained to the Director of Children's Services and this was then re-designated as a Section 20 fostering arrangement in early 2014.
8. Mr and Mrs IPR4 were approved as Foster Carers in June 2014 when they received level 1 payments. In August 2014 they were approved as level 4 carers and received the payment appropriate for that level.
9. At a subsequent review of them as Foster Carers there was a reluctance from panel to re-approve the registration of Mr and Mrs IPR4. This was caused by what is described in the NCC chronology as some 'clumsy assessment constructed from file information' which meant that the 'voice of the child' was not clearly contained in the paperwork.
10. [REDACTED] has presented a number of challenging behaviours but largely due to the input and stability provided by Mr and Mrs IPR4 is attending school/college and is reaching his goals.
11. [REDACTED] finds contact with NCC Social Workers difficult and he is described as wanting minimal contact preferring to see himself, understandably, as a regular member of the family he is living with.

12. The NCC Chronology notes that in a LAC Review held in November 2015 it is 'noted that [REDACTED] is doing well on terms of placement, health (though he has declined LAC health assessments) and education. Carers have been supportive of his education. [REDACTED]. NCC have agreed Staying Put arrangements post 18'.
13. Despite the lack of support initially from NCC, Mr and Mrs IPR 4 have persevered.
14. There appears to be a gap in the remuneration they have received due to the delay in correctly designating the placement and then in approving Mr and Mrs IPR4 as Foster Carers and they have had their fostering registration questioned as a result of a poor assessment.

The Findings of the Panel

Was the welfare of the child(ren) paramount in the decisions and actions of NCC?

15. The Panel consider that the need of the child [REDACTED] was not paramount in the decisions and actions taken by NCC in this case.
16. [REDACTED] was a child who required an assessment of his needs and given the information provided by his carers and the prior knowledge NCC had about him it was clear that this should have prompted an Initial Assessment.
17. NCC did not respond in an effective and timely fashion to ensure that [REDACTED] was offered the services that would be provided to a Looked After Child.

Were the Foster Carers treated fairly and justly?

18. The Panel consider that the Foster Carers were not treated fairly and justly in this case.
19. They were left to care for [REDACTED] firstly without his status as a Looked After Child and the allocation of a Supervising Social Worker and the financial support required to care for him.
20. They were not immediately provided with information and support that could have helped them in their care for [REDACTED] and the Council's obligation to him as a Looked After Child.
21. Their approval as Foster Carers has been staged and called into question and as a result the Panel consider that they may not have received the correct remuneration for their care of [REDACTED].

Were the Council's Policies and procedures followed properly?

22. The Panel Considers that NCC policies and procedures were not followed properly.
23. It is the view of the Panel that [REDACTED]'s situation as needing to be Looked After by the Council was clear and should have been addressed without delay. The carer suspects that NCC was avoiding responsibility for [REDACTED]. The Panel consider that this was a reasonable conclusion to draw.

Were the decisions and actions taken consistent with good Social Work practice?

24. The Panel consider that the decisions and actions taken in the case in the early stage were not good Social Work practice.
25. The decision to designate this as a private fostering arrangement was, in the view of the Panel, seriously flawed.
26. The current position whereby [REDACTED] is Looked After and a Staying Put Plan is in place is correct as is the registration of Mr and Mrs IPR4 as level 4 Foster Carers.
27. The assessment which caused panel to question the registration of Mr and Mrs IPR4 was also poor Social Work practice.

Suggestions for Remedies, Learning Points

Case Remedies

28. The Panel consider that the Director of Children's Services should formally apologise to Mr and Mrs IPR4 for the errors that have been made in this case.
29. The Panel also consider that Mr and Mrs IPR4 have effectively been caring for [REDACTED] since September 2013. If there is a shortfall of money that was paid to them as a result of the incorrect designation of this as a private fostering arrangement and the delay in registering them as Foster Carers then the Council should agree a financial settlement with them.

Learning Points

30. The Panel recommend that Young Children/Young People should be given clear information regarding Children's rights and advocacy. The Director of Children's Services should ensure that child friendly/age appropriate packs are established and provided to children/young people who enter the care system.
31. The Panel recommend that Children's Services need to ensure that training and information on Staying Put is available to Foster Carers and staff.
32. The Panel also recommend that the IRO service needs to ensure that Staying Put is an agenda item for young people at an appropriate time in their care history.

[REDACTED]
6th July 2016