

The Independent Foster Care Panel Review

Case IPR8

Case Summary

1. IPR8 concerns Foster Carers who were recruited and approved by an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA).
2. On 22nd May 2014 they had ■ children of ■ heritage placed with them; ■. This was the Foster Carers' first placement.
3. The children were placed under Section 20 ■
■
■.
4. Mr and Mrs IPR8 advised that they had been led to believe that there was a desire to keep the children together and that the placement with them would be 'long term'. ■
■
5. There were a few challenges in the first 6 weeks of the placement but Mr and Mrs IPR8 recall that 'at the end of June [2014] a Care Plan was established. The children were keen to remain living with [them] as they felt happy, cared for and safe; they did not want to go home.
6. In July and August, however, the chronology records an increase in challenging behaviour, particularly from ■ ■
■ ■ ■
■
7. ■ ■ ■
■
■
■
■
8. Discussions between professionals around this time highlighted concern about the way the placement was going and on 22nd August 2014 a LAC Review was held for the ■ children and at this it was concluded that the placement was not meeting all of the children's needs and that a 'Together or Apart Assessment' was to be completed.
9. Shortly after this on 26th August 2014 the Social Worker for the children asked the Supervising Social Worker for a meeting about the Foster Carers. ■
■
■
■

10. A concerns meeting was held on 30th September 2014 [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

11. It was agreed at this meeting to find [REDACTED] another placement and to review the suitability of the placement for [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].

12. The NCC chronology records that on 1st October 2014 'the CAFCASS Children's Guardian expressed concerns about the carers following a visit to the placement.'

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In view of this the Social Worker was advised by her team manager to start looking for alternative placements for the children.

13. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

14. On 17th October 2014 the NCC chronology reports that the IRO supported the decision to move the children and agreed that a further review was not necessary at that time as she was satisfied that the views of the children were being heard.

15. On 22nd and 23rd October 2014 the Social Worker for the children made visits to discuss the plans to move the children. On 24th October 2014 the IRO reminded the Social Worker of 'the need to write up the Together of Apart Assessment. The Social Worker's reply indicated that this assessment was ongoing, but overall it was her view that currently the most appropriate plan was for all [REDACTED] children to be in separate placements and not with the current carers.'

16. [REDACTED] moved into a respite placement on 24th October 2014 prior to a full time move to a residential unit.

17. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] moved to new placements on 7th November 2014.

18. The Carers made an enquiry about being assessed as NCC Foster Carers on 11th November 2014 but they withdrew this on 24th February 2015.

19. The Social Worker for the Children and the Supervising Social Worker held a meeting to discuss concerns about the carers on 24th November 2014 and these were reported by the Supervising Social Worker to be being dealt with on 28th November 2014.

Were the Foster Carers treated fairly and justly?

28. The Panel do not consider that the Foster Carers have been treated fairly and justly in this case.

29. The Panel question the decision to place these children with these newly appointed carers. [REDACTED]

30. It is apparent that there were tensions within the team of professionals around the children and rather than this being resolved by the professionals they inappropriately involved the carers. [REDACTED]

31. The Panel question the focus of the support that the Foster Carers received in this placement from their Supervising Social Worker. [REDACTED]

32. [REDACTED]

Were the Council's Policies and procedures followed properly?

33. The Panel consider at this that there were serious weaknesses in the application of the Council's Policies and Procedures.

34. Reference has already been made to the concerns about the matching process. It is not clear to the panel, however, whether this is a weakness in the process itself or in the way it was applied. [REDACTED]

35. [REDACTED]

36. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

37. The Panel also question the decision by the IRO in October 2014 that a review was not necessary at that stage. Moving the children and separating the sibling group is a major change to the Care Plan and this should have prompted a full LAC review.

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

38. The Panel consider that there are a number of aspects of poor Social Work practice evident in this case. Firstly the matching decision should at the very least identify areas where a placement requires additional support and services to meet the needs of the child(ren) placed.

39. Secondly, the decision of the IRO not to have a further review when there were likely to be significant changes to the care plan is, in the opinion of the Panel, a poor decision. Furthermore, at the point that the IRO supported the decision to move the children on 17th October 2014 the Together or Apart Assessment was not completed or written up and therefore could not be considered and challenged in the Care Planning process for the children.

40. Finally the carers Supervising Social Worker seemed to have a greater focus on challenging the decisions in respect of the care plan rather than supporting the carers in what was a very difficult first placement. It is poor practice for the professionals not being able to address issues and differences without transmitting and involving the Foster Carers

Suggestions for Remedies, Learning Points and Further Actions

41. The Carers, Mr and Mrs IPR8 were employed by an IFA and it is our understanding that they have now moved to a different IFA and they have continued to foster.

42. The Panel appreciate that the Foster Carers had a very difficult time with their first placement and that was, at the very least, exacerbated by poor matching, inadequate preparation combined with a lack of support and tensions within the team of professionals around the children.

Case Remedies

43. The Panel considers that there are no specific remedies necessary in respect of this case.

Learning Points

44. The Panel consider that the Director of Children's Services needs to ensure that the matching process is robust with clearly recorded rationale for the placement and how specifically identified needs are to be met.
45. The Panel considers that the Director of Children's Services needs to ensure that all Social Workers are clear about how to resolve or escalate issues with IFAs commissioned by the Council
46. The Panel recommend that the Director of Children's Services should ensure that Children should have standard information about their rights to advocacy and support and Foster Carers need to be aware of this. The fact that they have this information and are aware of their rights should be recorded in LAC Review minutes.


6th July 2016