

The Independent Foster Care Panel Review

Case IPR35

Case Summary

1. IPR35 was approved as a Foster Carer for NCC in 2012 after working for the Council as [REDACTED]. IPR35 was approved for same-sex placements due to the room restrictions on her house. She had her first supervision in November 2012 at which potential placements were discussed
2. Her second supervision took place in early January 2013 where other potential placements were discussed and at that supervision IPR35 mentioned a [REDACTED] year old girl [REDACTED] who she was aware of through her role [REDACTED]
3. [REDACTED] was placed with IPR35 in February 2013. There was good preparation for this placement as there was concern about keeping [REDACTED] safe [REDACTED]
4. She had her annual review in August 2013. This was a positive review with a recommendation for her to continue as a Foster Carer for 2 same sex placements
5. In December 2013 the restriction on same sex placements was removed and approval was extended for a 3rd child in placement as IPR35 had moved house and now had space to accommodate foster children in separate rooms.
6. There are good records of regular supervision over the time IPR35 was a Foster Carer.
7. A [REDACTED] year old boy [REDACTED] was placed with IPR35 in February 2014, [REDACTED]
8. This appears to have had a detrimental effect on [REDACTED] in the placement and over the summer IPR35 describes the placement as having broken down. IPR35 gave NCC 28 days' notice for the placement to end. The placement ended on 2nd August 2014.
9. It is worth noting that IPR35 stated that she was made aware that [REDACTED] had told a Social Worker, before she was placed with her, that she couldn't live with other children with the exception of her own siblings. She was not aware of this until after Child [REDACTED] had been placed [REDACTED]
10. On 19th September 2014 [REDACTED] went into respite care at IPR35's request [REDACTED] over that weekend.
11. On 22nd September 2014 [REDACTED] was taken to a supervised contact meeting [REDACTED]. Some bruising was observed [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] reported that IPR35 had caused the bruising. [REDACTED]
12. [REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

The Findings of the Panel

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

20. The Panel consider that the welfare of the children was paramount in the decisions and actions that NCC took in respect of finding a different placement for ■ and in removing ■ quickly when the allegation had been made by him. However, the Panel question the decision to allow ■ to return to the foster home on the day of contact when the allegations first came to light.
21. The Panel has serious concerns about the matching process which resulted in ■ being placed with IPR35. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] The placement with ■ appears to have been going well until the placement of ■ but it had 'broken down' within 6 months.
22. The Panel is unsure as to why the decision was made to end ■'s placement rather than ■'s. We have not seen any discussion or exploration about the impact of ■ on the placement of ■ and whether it was considered that ■'s placement should have been ended.

Were the Foster Carers treated fairly and justly?

23. The Panel do not consider that IPR35 was treated fairly and justly.
24. The Panel consider that the LADO process took too long to resolve, taking 3 weeks to set up the initial strategy meeting and then a further 7 weeks to hold the final LADO meeting.
25. The Panel also have serious concerns about the quality of this process. A number of actions were identified in the initial strategy meeting but there is no clear evidence in the minutes of the Final LADO meeting that these have been addressed by the people they were allocated to.
26. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

27. [REDACTED]

28. The minutes do not contain reasons or a rationale as to how the decision of unsubstantiated was arrived at. When there are comments recorded in the minutes that would possibly point towards a decision of unfounded then the Panel would have expected to see a robust rationale within the minutes for why a decision of unsubstantiated was determined.

Were the Council's Policies and procedures followed properly?

29. The Panel do not think that the Council' Policies have been followed properly. The Panel is concerned about 4 aspects of the how the Council's Policies and Procedures were followed in this case.

30. Firstly, there are concerns about the matching process in the case of both children placed with this carer.

31. [REDACTED]

32. [REDACTED]

33. [REDACTED]

34. Secondly, the LADO process (or at the very least the minutes of that process) lack robust practice and analysis and the Panel consider it inadequate to justify the decision that has been made

35. Thirdly following from the interview with IPR35 the Panel asked to see the original assessment of IPR35 as a Foster Carer.

36. The Panel is of the view that there are very serious and significant weaknesses in this assessment. [REDACTED]

37. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

38. Fourthly, The Panel is concerned that IPR35 has reported that she was never sent the minutes of any meetings that were held. The Panel have noted an irregularity about when meeting notes are shared with Foster Carers.

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

39. The Panel consider that there are 2 main areas of weakness in Social Work practice in this case

40. Firstly the assessment of IPR35 has serious weaknesses. The Independent Assessors have raised particular concerns that these weaknesses have not been highlighted and addressed by the Social Workers undertaking the assessment, the Managers supervising the Social Worker and the by the Fostering Panel itself.

41. Secondly the LADO process is inadequate in both the urgency with which it was completed and the quality of the process itself.

Suggestions for Remedies, Learning Points and Further Actions

Case Remedies

42. The Panel strongly recommend that the assessment of this Foster Carer is reviewed by Children's Services and any weaknesses identified and lessons learned addressed.

43. The Panel advise that when considering applications to foster from current or former employees that the Director of Children's Services should ensure that assessments should be carried out by an independent Social Worker.

44. The Panel consider that the Director of Children's Services should review the LADO decision in this case.

Learning Points

45. The Panel recommend that the Director of Children's Services should review the matching process in order to assist that process and to maintain an accurate record or the rationale for the decision.

46. The Panel recommend that the potential impact on any other placements already in the foster home should be considered by the Social Worker and the IRO for the child(ren) already in the placement. Good records must be kept of this process and the outcome and any obvious risks that may need to be managed in a placement.

47. The Panel also recommend that the Director of Children's Services should review the LADO service to ensure that there is sufficient capacity, urgency and experience in this vital process.


6th July 2016