

The Independent Foster Care Panel Review

Case IPR39

Case Summary

1. IPR39 concerns Foster Carers who are supported by an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) who had [REDACTED] children who were placed with them in September 2012. In April 2014 the [REDACTED] children were removed into respite care following an allegation that one of the Foster Carers had breached confidentiality [REDACTED]
[REDACTED].
2. The LADO was consulted on 24th April 2014 and gave clear direction that this would not be treated as a LADO referral but rather it should follow the concerns route.
3. The children were removed into respite care on 25th April 2014 by the IFA and returned to the carers on 1st May 2014. Following this a 'Written Agreement' dealing with confidentiality and positive attitudes was prepared by the IFA and which the carers ultimately signed in October 2014.
4. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
5. LAC Reviews took place on 12th October 2012, 4th April 2014 and 3rd June 2014. The review notes for 3rd June 2014 meeting records that [REDACTED] children speak positively about the care [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
6. There are very few records on the Carefirst System describing this situation or what actions if any NCC Social Workers took during this situation. It is recorded that the EDT were contacted when the children were being removed by the IFA.

The Findings of the Panel

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

7. The Panel considers that the welfare of the children was not paramount in this case.
8. There is no evidence to suggest that it was necessary nor in the best interests of the children to move them into a respite placement and there is evidence that this caused them unnecessary distress. There is no information in the NCC records to justify this action.
9. NCC did not have a requirement for a 'Disruptions Meeting' at that time and it appears that there has been no effective follow up to the decision to remove the children to respite placement. Neither the process followed to remove the

children nor any follow up appear to have had sufficient focus on the welfare and wellbeing of the children.

10. There is no evidence of the IRO being consulted or involved about the proposed move to a respite placement. It appears that the children were left in the original placement overnight following the concerns having been raised which suggests that the risk was not regarded as extreme.
11. There is no evidence that the children concerned were given advice about advocacy and support that would be available to them or about how to make a complaint should they be dissatisfied about how they have been treated.

Were the Foster Carers treated fairly and justly?

12. The Panel do not consider that the carers have been treated fairly and justly in this case.
13. The decision to remove the children into a respite placement has not been properly justified and was distressing to both the children and the carers.
14. The Panel have concerns that it appears the carers were advised to give an untruthful explanation of why the children were no longer in their care for the time that they were in a respite placement.

Were the Council's policies and procedures followed properly?

15. The Panel do not consider that the proper policies and procedures were followed in this case.
16. An IFA has a duty to consult and involve NCC properly in any decisions to move any child that NCC have placed with them and although contact was made with the Emergency Duty Team in the opinion of the Panel this was not adequate consultation or involvement.
17. NCC have recently introduced a requirement for a 'disruptions meetings. This case, together with the poor recording and lack of effective follow up serve to demonstrate the importance of such meetings.
18. Having ruled out involvement from the LADO and the following action to return the children to the carers the issue should have been dealt with under the NCC concerns procedure. There has been no evidence found by the Panel to verify that this happened. The 'Written Agreement' was signed in October 2014 which is 6 months after the event which is significantly outside of the timescale for addressing concerns according to the policy.

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

19. The Panel do not consider that moving the children into respite placement on the basis of the concern that was raised was good Social Work practice.

20. The Panel have concerns about the limited involvement of the Social Work Team for the children in that decision and the lack of recording about what is a significant event for both the children and the carers.
21. The Panel also have concerns about the apparent lack of involvement of the IRO during the decision to move the children into a respite placement.
22. The Panel also have concerns that the LAC Review held in June 2014 did not question that decision effectively and ask for follow up action to take place to review it and address any outstanding consequences.

Suggestions for Remedies, Learning Points and Further Actions

Case Remedies

23. The Panel consider that NCC needs to carry out a more formal review of this case with the IFA concerned. The Panel has only had limited information on this case as it has not been able to access to the IFA records despite repeated requests.
24. Subject to the above review confirming the view of the Panel that the children and the Foster Carers should be given an apology for the distress caused by the unnecessary removal of the children to the respite placement.

Learning Points

25. The Panel recommend that when the LADO has contact with an IFA but decides that the issue is not one to be dealt with by the LADO, the Social Worker for the child should be informed that an approach to the LADO has been made for recording and follow up purposes.
26. The Panel also recommends that the Director of Children's Services needs to ensure that disruption meetings are properly embedded into the practice of Children's Services and that this also incorporates good quality recording of the events, decisions and actions.
27. The Panel wish to point out that IROs have a duty and obligation to escalate concerns if they believe decisions and actions have been made without consultation with them and not in the best interests of children. The Director of Children's Services must ensure that IROs are aware of this obligation.
28. Finally the Panel recommends that the Director of Children's Services needs to ensure that all Social Workers involved with Children placed with IFAs understand their role in significant decisions about the placement and about the procedures that must be followed in dealing with concerns and allegations.


6th July 2016