

Child Abuse inquiry – Section 21 response from West Dunbartonshire Council

Section D

5.8 - 5.10 & 5.12 – 5.13 (Appendix 1 & 2)

West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC), in response to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry, were asked to consider information pertaining to the operation of our Fostering Services during the period 1930 to 17th December 2014.

In the summer of 2020, WDC were able to provide the inquiry team with a full response to our study. Section D of this report reflected identified information that we were able to reflect back in our report to the cases of abuse that had been alleged during the timeline asked of us.

This paper provides a synopsis of those findings across the final part of the document, section 5 (5.8 to 5.13).

Section 5.8 – Known Abusers

The study considered a range of case files across the timelines provided. There were a number of cases of alleged abuse noted. Some of these were established from the case study, while others were known to the staff group who were involved in the perusal of files. It was acknowledged that there was a significant amount of experienced workers involved in the study, with one worker having worked in the childcare field for over thirty years. This knowledge enabled the identification of some cases to be made in the early part of the study.

Details provided in the main report advised on known information about the allegations that had been made, the specific roles of those being allegedly involved in abuse (ie Foster Carer, Kinship carer) their specific details including names, dates of births and addresses were all contained in the return.

WDC reported allegations across a range of concerns (alleged, physical abuse, neglect, bullying, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and one case where the use of cannabis in the household had been raised as a concern).

Dates of alleged abuse were notified and details of the investigation processes were noted, where this was clearly defined. As part of the study it was also acknowledged what formal statutory checks had been established, including background information from health, police and referees or where the information pertaining to checks were unclear or not recorded.

Acknowledgment on how statutory checks were carried out, or not were recorded, where information was clear from the file being read. For some of the records studied it was noted that formal checks had been carried out, however for others it

was less clear. Recognition was also provided to the assessment process, providing some background to the type of checks being carried out across different decades and the robustness surrounding these across this timeline.

Details were included in this section surrounding the outcomes of each of the identified allegations that had been raised following internal or external investigation. For WDC our findings identified a range of outcomes, including; no further action, progression for deregistration, carer resignation. In some instances the study found that there was no written rationale for the continuation of the caring role, as the papers read were not clear on how outcomes were fully concluded.

Where agreement was reached for no further action it was not always clear from the file how care was monitored or supported following allegations made. For some, allegations raised held no foundations. In one instance there was a recorded note around the monitoring of the cleanliness of one fostering household, however records did not create any further records to demonstrate progression of this ask.

5.9 Specific complaints

WDC reported on the number of complaints identified during the period studied. Recorded within the return was acknowledgement of the type of complaints, who had made them and details of the allegations or complaints being made.

Details were recorded on the nature of the complaint and where recorded what particular processes were followed on each occasion, where this was clearly noted in the file. For example, whether this followed an internal complaints procedure or required a more formal process, including Police investigation.

In this section of our return we were able to provide details of known complaints and the approach taken in most circumstances. For example there was a couple of identified cases where the complaint is raised, but no clear record of the process followed and poor or no recordings of outcomes or details if complaints were robustly considered. Where complaints were formalised to a Police investigation this is recorded, however it was identified that the rationale for not referring others as the detail is not made explicit in the file.

5.10 Civil Actions

WDC were not able to identify any files during our study that would relate to any civil action.

5.12 Police

WDC were able to identify the number of referrals that had resulted in Police investigation. We were able to provide details on who those investigations were carried out against, with all names being provided to the inquiry team.

Specific details surrounding the officers involved in the case were noted, with rank and Police division clearly acknowledged. Timelines, though no specific dates were

provided in the study. The report provided more general information to the specific month and year, for example one was identified as being carried out in June 2007 (no actual dates provided). In all cases noted, it is recorded that the Police involvement was conducted through the Family protection unit in L Division.

5.13 Crown

WDC were not able to identify outcomes of any Crown investigations or outcomes if these had progressed to Court. Our study concluded on this area as not known.