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Our Ref: EF/AA

12 September 2015

Dear Ms McBeath

Your complaints about care services provided to Ms Karen Cowan (d.o.b. 28/3/54) and adaptations to your home

You contacted Roger Connery, Head of Social Work 14 August 2014 to complain about a number of aspects of the care and services we are providing to your partner Ms Karen Cowan. I have management responsibility for complaints about these areas and asked Kate Lindsay to investigate your concerns. I understand Kate discussed your concerns with you during phonecalls on 18 August 2015 and 2 September 2015. I have now completed my review of your complaint. I am sorry that you felt that you had to complain.

As you know Kate Lindsay had now completed her investigation of your complaints and I understand she discussed this with you during your phonecall on 2 September 2015. In this letter I will explain what we found out during that investigation, what our conclusions are and the immediate actions I am going to take to address your concerns.

The complaints you agreed with Kate Lindsay on 18 August 2015 and that we have investigated are:

1. A care worker from Gleninver Care was rude and unprofessional in their care and attitude to both Ms Cowan and you on 9 August 2015
2. Gleninver Council have unreasonably refused to support your application for a private sector housing adaptations grant; and
3. Gleninver Council staff have not respond to your concerns promptly.

Background

Ms Cowan has been in receiving services from Gleninver Council since her diagnosis with early onset dementia in January 2012. Ms Cowan suffered a mild stroke (TIA) in May 2015 and was an inpatient at Gleninver General until 10 June 2015. Before her discharge Ms Cowan was assessed by an Occupational Therapist (OT) from Gleninver Council. The OT discussed Ms Cowan's future needs with you and her care team at the hospital and a package of immediate support to help you care for Ms Cowan in her own home was set up.

The care staff during the week were members of Gleninver Council staff already known to you and Ms Cowan. Unfortunately it wasn't possible to provide the weekend care you needed directly from Gleninver Council staff and weekend care visits were to be provided by Gleninver Care. The care plan noted that it was very important for Ms Cowan that she had continuity of carers as she was likely to become very confused and distressed by visits from new staff.

On 9 August 2015 the care worker who was to have visited from Gleninver Care was unexpectedly absent and an emergency cover carer was provided. This carer was not known to you or Ms Cowan. During the visit you became very concerned about the care being provided to Ms Cowan and when you challenged the carer about this she was rude to you.

Because of her TIA Ms Cowan has great difficulty in mobilising and is receiving physiotherapy care to help her with this. A number of temporary adaptations have been put in place in your home to assist you in caring for Ms Cowan while she recovers. Following her discharge from hospital, the OT visited Ms Cowan and you both at home in order to assess whether any adaptations would be required to meet your longer term needs. It was likely Ms Cowan would have more restricted mobility than before her TIA.

The OT noted in her assessment that Ms Cowan didn't have access to toilet and shower facilities on the ground floor and she was unlikely to be able to use the existing permanent facilities. The OT noted that you wished to apply for a Private Sector grant to cover the costs of this adaptation. The OT concluded however that your home was not suitable for Ms Cowan on a permanent basis because of the very steep external access which Ms Cowan would be unlikely to be able to use safely. At the present time she is lifted out of your home by ambulance chair when the ambulance crew attend to take her to physiotherapy. You were advised of the OT's view and our decision not to support your application for a grant by Mr Alexander (the manager responsible for grant applications) on 5 August 2015.

You were unhappy with this decision and concerned about the care Ms Cowan had received from the emergency carer from Gleninver Care and you complained to us about both of these issues on 14 August 2015. In your complaint letter you also noted that you had tried to contact the Team Leader to discuss this but had not received any response. You noted that you had had considerable difficulties contacting staff in the past.

Investigation

Kate Lindsay reviewed your letter of complaint and discussed your concerns with you by phone. She asked the staff directly involved to provide her with their comments on your complaint. She spoke with the team leader at Gleninver Care to make your concerns known to them and asked them to speak directly with the staff member involved and provide her with comments – this was followed up by a telephone call in which your concerns were discussed further.

Kate reviewed Ms Cowan's care records including her care plan and the OT notes. She has checked relevant Government policy & guidance on adaptations and Gleninver Council policy on this too.

Complaint 1: A care worker from Gleninver Care was rude and unprofessional in their care and attitude to both Ms Cowan and you on 9 August 2015.

What happened?

You told Kate Lindsay that the care worker had been rough in her treatment of Ms Cowan and when you had asked her to be more careful she had snapped at you and told you you should be lucky she was there at all. She also commented that she was highly experienced and knew what she was doing and didn't need your help. You were very distressed by this as you have cared for Ms Cowan for several years now and know her better than anyone else. You didn't say anymore at the time as you were aware that Ms Cowan was already very distressed by the appearance of a stranger in your home and you were anxious not to distress her more.

Gleninver Care told me that the carer who was supposed to visit with you that day was unexpectedly absent. They had difficulty in finding a relief carer from within Ms Cowan's usual carers and had to call on a new staff member. The carer called did have experience with dementia patients however Gleninver Care were not able to confirm to Kate Lindsay that they had advised the carer of Ms Cowan's underlying condition. When they spoke with the member of staff she said she had not been advised of this when she was called in although she has suspected it once she attended.

Gleninver Care told us that they were disappointed Ms Cowan and you had had a poor experience with one of their carers. They had spoken with the member of staff who could not recall being rough or speaking to you as you described. They asked that we offer you their assurance that this had not been the intention of the member of staff who was very experienced.

What should have happened?

Ms Cowan's Careplan states that she suffers from dementia and that it is important to minimise the number of carers overall and avoid sending unknown members of staff without prior planning and notification to allow you to prepare Ms Cowan for this.

All care staff, directly or indirectly employed, are expected to behave in a professional manner at all times.

All care staff must be qualified carers unless they are identified as being trainees in which case a trained carer must accompany them. Staff should adhere to the National Care Standards of the Scottish Social Services Council.

My findings and my decision

Ms Cowan's Careplan states she should only have known carers and that when this is not possible you should be advised of this. This did not happen.

The carer who attended Ms Cowan was not given the necessary background information to allow her to care appropriately for Ms Cowan. Gleninver Care should have provided this information.

The care you describe receiving from the carer who attended Ms Cowan is not of the standard required by Gleninver Council expect. This should not have happened.

I cannot clarify the difference in views about what the carer said on that occasion. However whether or not she intended to upset you and Ms Cowan, she clearly did and again this should not have happened.

I have found several failings in the care provided to Ms Cowan on 9 August 2014 and I uphold your complaint.

I apologise that we have failed to ensure that Ms Cowan and you received the proper level of care. I am taking action to help us ensure this doesn't happen again in the future for you or for our other clients. I have summarised this action below

Action Plan / Learning Points

Action
Advise Gleninver Care of our decision and ask them to discuss our findings with the member of staff concerned to allow them to reflect on their future practice.
Ask Gleninver Care to review their procedures for obtaining emergency cover to ensure that staff are appropriately experienced and aware of the client's needs. I will ask Gleninver Care to report back to me on their review.

Complaint 2: Gleninver Council have unreasonably refused to support your application for a private sector housing adaptations grant

What happened?

Your request for a ground floor hygiene adaptation was discussed at a Team Leaders' Meeting on 31 July 2015 and again it was determined that this could not be provided within the Council's best value policy. Mr Alexander wrote to you on 5 August 2015 advising that you had the option to pay for alterations yourselves or the council would assist you in looking for a new property to meet Ms Cowan's needs or discuss residential care options with you. This offer remains in place and if you would like to discuss this with Mr Alexander please contact him.

Your neighbours adaptations are not something I am able to discuss here for reasons of client confidentiality it would not be appropriate for me to discuss the adaptations made to another person's property as I am sure you will appreciate.

My findings and conclusions

I am sorry we have not provided you and your partner with the service we would have wished to on all occasions.

What happens next?

I will follow up to ensure that the action points I have identified are completed. I hope we have resolved matters for you. If there is anything in this letter which you would like to discuss with me, please contact me. My contact details are shown above.

If you are unhappy with this response you have the right to ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at your complaint. Please note that the SPSO cannot normally look at complaints more than 12 months after you became aware of the problem. You can contact them on Freephone 0800 377 7330 or go to their website www.spsso.org.uk or write to them at Freepost EH641, Edinburgh, EH3 OBR.

Thank you again for bringing your concerns to our attention. Complaints are very valuable to us. They allow us to learn from our service users and make changes to improve the service we deliver to them and to those who use our services in the future. All our complaints are monitored by the Senior Management Team to ensure we share the learning from complaints across our organisation.

Yours sincerely

Simon Taylor
Head of Children's Services

Enc. Our Response to Your Complaint