

Children and Young People Committee 5 July 2022

Item 14: Response to the Local Government Ombudsman Report – Public Speaker

Short statement from Mrs X to the Children and Young People Committee, Cambridgeshire County Council on 5 July 2022 regarding the Ombudsman's Report 7 April 2022

(Please note the full statement has been sent to the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council)

We are extremely grateful for the report by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. Not enough parents know that this free service exists.

My son is an amazing 9-year-old boy who is severely disabled and has a host of medical and educational needs. Our case pre-dates the pandemic, but once it was clear that he had clinical vulnerabilities to Covid-19 and could not attend school, in order to get Alternative Provision, I wrote many letters to the Council. Much of my time was spent replaying current legislation to Council officers. Either they knew their statutory duties and chose to ignore them or they were ignorant of the law: which is it? The Ombudsman Michael King said about the Report and I quote ***“the council has demonstrated a fundamental lack of understanding of its legal obligations and duties towards children in the county.”***

My family has been subjected to unprofessional and in some cases unlawful behaviour by the Council. We feel we have been ignored and misled. This is not a few bumps in the road. This has been a prolonged and sustained process over a period of three years. The actions and inactions of the Council have amounted, in my view – and I do not use these words lightly – to a form of bullying and persecution.

Let me be clear: as a result of the Ombudsman's Report, we have received a personal apology from Chief Executive, Stephen Moir, together with the financial remedy recommended by the Ombudsman, and for this we are grateful.

BUT it is alarming that **the Council has still not put things right**. To date my son is receiving some Alternative Provision but **it is not the full-time education and SEN provision to which he is entitled** and which the Ombudsman required the Council to act on. Twelve weeks have passed since the report was issued and still this has not been put in place: the claim in the Director of Education's report on the Ombudsman's Findings under 2.3 that the responses to two key recommendations are 'in progress' and 'On track' is not satisfactory. Please confirm, as a result of this meeting, the specific actions Councillors intend to make to put my son's full and lawful provision in place.

Looking more widely, I urge the Council to consult with representatives from the LGSCO, and organisations such as IPSEA, parent forums and other third parties, to consider what better **early** intervention could look like; to re-examine the way it can support children with special educational needs and disabilities; and to bring the outcomes of those discussions back to this Committee later this year so that genuine transformation can commence. I have indicated to Mr Moir and Councillor Nethsingha that I would welcome the opportunity to be personally involved in the service improvement programme.

Today is a very public line in the sand and I ask you to take meaningful action and to clarify for me – and for all other families in a similar position – how you are going to put this right and ensure it never happens again.

Ends.