

ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
1 SEPTEMBER 2015

ANNUAL ADULT SOCIAL CARE
COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS REPORT 2014-15

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES

Purpose of Report

1. To provide Members of the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a summary of the complaints and compliments for Adult Social Care services commissioned or provided by the Adults and Communities Department in 2014-15. The annual report is attached as Appendix A.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The Committee last received a report on complaints and compliments on the 17 September 2014. This report covered the year 2013-14 and Members requested that further reports continue to be presented on the annual basis.

Background

3. The Department has a long standing statutory duty to have a complaints process in place for Adult Social Care. The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009, effective from 1 April 2009, introduced a two stage process with flexible investigation methods and timescales to suit the nature and complexity of the complaint. If the complainant is unhappy with the outcome after stage one, they can ask the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) to investigate.
4. Under these Regulations, there is a further requirement to produce an annual report that reviews the effectiveness of the complaints and compliments procedures and provides a summary of statistical information. The attached report fulfils this requirement and presents a summary of the complaints handled in 2014-15.
5. Complaints and compliments about other aspects of the Adult and Communities Department are reported separately as part of the corporate complaints process.

Key points

6. There was a slight decrease (5.8%) in the number of complaints received in 2014-15 compared to the previous year (145 compared to 154). This has reversed a long-term trend of yearly increases.

7. When complaint volumes are set against the context of overall numbers in receipt of long-term support during the year (9,574), it is clear that a very small percentage go on to make a formal complaint (c.1.5%)
8. The LGO in their annual report for 2014-15 highlighted Adult Social Care as a growth area with a 10% increase in complaints received by them. The common areas included care assessments, charging for care and safeguarding.
9. During the year, 16 complaints were received by the Ombudsman. This is slightly less than the previous year (18). The Ombudsman made decisions on 18 cases during the year finding maladministration in three instances. No financial remedies were recommended.
10. Response times have remained healthy. There was a slight drop on the percentage resolved within 10 working days (62% compared to 68%). Only one complaint was not resolved within the maximum time allowed under statutory regulations.
11. Care charges and Invoicing remains the highest single area for complaints, but there are signs of improvement following a number of process changes and system enhancements. Relative to the number of invoices produced, there has been a reduction in complaints received.
12. There has been a downturn in the number of recorded compliments this year. Largely this is due to a more consistent policy being applied regarding solicited comments. Compliments exceeded complaints for the second year running.

Conclusions

13. Further work is required to improve how the department learns from complaints, and how managers can be better equipped to apply root cause analysis techniques. This is a common theme across the organisation (and other authorities) and will be progressed as a key priority during 2015-16.
14. The Department of Health have deferred any further work on draft proposals for an appeals-based system to sit alongside the statutory complaints process. A further position statement is expected after the Comprehensive Spending Review in November 2015.

Recommendations

- 15 The Committee is asked to note the report and are invited to make comments.

Background Papers

None.

Circulation under the Local Alert Issues Procedure

None.

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List of Appendices

Appendix A – Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments: Annual Report - April 2014-March 2015

Relevant Impact Assessments

Equal Opportunities and Human Rights Implications

15. An Equalities Impact and Human Rights Assessment was carried out during 2014-15, which concluded that there was no requirement to proceed to a full evaluation.