

**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE - 2 NOVEMBER 2015**

**CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE STATUTORY COMPLAINTS AND
COMPLIMENTS ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY
SERVICES**

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to present for the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee's consideration the Children's Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments Annual Report for 2014/15.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. A new Corporate Complaints Procedure was adopted by the Authority in April 2010 which requires an Annual Report to be produced, analysing and reviewing complaints received during the preceding 12 months.

Background

3. The Customer Relations Team manages and co-ordinates complaints relating to 3 separate complaints systems:
 - a) Adult Social Care statutory process;
 - b) Children's Social Care statutory process;
 - c) Corporate Complaints process – these are complaints relating to other services provided by the Council where there is no other form of redress.
4. The second category is the subject of this report. The Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual report 2014-15 was considered by the Scrutiny Commission in June.
5. Complaints regarding Children's Social Care are subject to the requirements of Regulation 18(2) of Statutory Instrument 2006 No. 1681 Local Authority Social Services Complaints (England) Regulations 2006 and Regulation 13(3)

of Statutory Instrument 2006 No. 1738 The Children Act (1989)
Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.

6. As detail is included in the Annual Report itself, the purpose of this report is to pick out some of the main, headline issues emerging from the analysis of complaints activity for 2014/2015 and the department's planned activity to respond to this.

Complaints received and outcomes

7. The number of complaints in 2014/15 were as follows:
 - 57 complaints considered at Stage 1 compared to 56 in 2013/14;
 - 9 complaints considered at Stage 2 compared to 6 in 2013/14;
 - 2 complaints considered at Stage 3 compared to 1 in 2013/14
8. While the number of complaints at Stage 1 is almost identical to last year this is in the context of a reduction in referrals to Children's Social care. A larger proportion have been escalated to Stage 2 and 3 than previous years, as they have not been resolved at earlier stages, this may be in part due to a change in Local Government Ombudsman practice. No children's social care statutory complaints were escalated to the Ombudsman in 2014/15.
9. Overall fewer complaints were upheld: 63% of complaints were not upheld compared to 57% in 2013/14 and only 5% fully upheld.
10. Analysis of causes of complaints shows fewer complaints in 2014/15 about the quality of our work compared to 2013/14 (8 compared to 17), however there were notably more complaints regarding sensitivity or empathy of staff (11 compared with 5) and delays in providing service (8 compared with 0), and complaints with multiple causes (7 compared with 1).
11. Complaints about delays in providing service were most likely to be upheld with 75% (6) of the 8 being upheld.
12. 12% of complaints (7) were brought by young people compared with 9% (5) last year.
13. 91% of complaints at stage 1 were responded to within the statutory maximum 20 days and 42% responded to within the best practice indicator of 10 days, this is lower than 63% in 2013-14 – however the level improved towards the end of the year.
14. Only 2 of the five complaints considered under stage 2 during 2014/15 were completed within the statutory timescale of 65 working days.

15. 31 compliments were received in 2014/15 compared to 25 in 2013/14.

Key Learning Points with regard to complaints

16. A review of the complaints partly and fully upheld identifies that preventative improvements are not being identified in the majority of cases. This theme is not unique to children's social care and will be prioritised as a corporate work priority for 2015-16.
17. In addition the following key learning points are highlighted by the customer relations team to improve our response to complaints and fulfil our promises to customers within the Council's Customer Service Standards:
- Timeliness of responding to complaints
 - Data Protection concerns
 - The importance of apologising effectively.

Actions to be taken

- Ensure children are aware of and empowered to be able to make complaints.
- Monitor service delays.
- Continue action already underway re: Life Story Work.
- Ensure addressing complaints remains a priority .
- Reminders to staff and managers re: process for Data Protection and responding to breaches.
- Circulation of guidance re: apologies to all managers.

Resource Implications

18. The annual report outlines the costs incurred through the complaints procedure were £13,130, an increase of approximately £1,000 compared to last year.
19. Improvement activity will be carried out within existing resources. There are no resource implications from this. The Director of Corporate Resources has been consulted on this report.

Conclusions

20. Overall this has been a positive year for complaints management across children's' social care services, though there are areas to improve. The

service has put an action plan in place to further improve our service and our response to complaints.

21. The Children & Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the Annual report and the action to be taken by the service.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

22. None

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List of Appendices

Appendix A - Children's Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2014/15.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

23. None