



## **CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**7 NOVEMBER 2016**

### **CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE STATUTORY COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16**

### **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 2015/16.

#### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 sets out the policy framework against which children's social care complaints should be considered.
3. Local Authorities must each financial year publish an Annual Report (regulation 13(3)).

#### **Background**

4. The Complaints Team sit within the Corporate Resources Department who manage and co-ordinate complaints relating to 3 separate complaints systems:
  - a) Adult Social Care - a statutory process
  - b) Children's Social Care – a statutory process
  - c) Corporate Complaints – a non-statutory process, which considers complaints relating to other services provided by the Council and where there is no other form of redress.
5. The second category is the subject of this report. The Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual Report for 2015-16 was considered by the Scrutiny Commission on 15 June 2016.
6. As detail is included in the Annual Report itself, the purpose of this report is to pick out some of the headline issues emerging from the analysis of complaints activity for 2015/16 along with the department's planned activity to respond to this.

### **Complaints received and outcomes**

7. The number of complaints in 2015/16 were as follows:
  - 65 complaints considered at Stage 1 compared to 57 in 2014/15
  - 7 complaints considered at Stage 2 compared to 9 in 2014/15
  - 3 complaints considered at Stage 3 compared to 2 in 2014/15
8. Using the figures on numbers of referrals made to Childrens Social Care, in 1.6% of cases a complaint is subsequently received. This is an increase on last year (+0.4%).
9. The number of requests escalating from Stage 1 reduced by two and this represents a reduced escalation rate of just 11%. Every effort is made to prevent un-necessary escalation of complaints and these figures provide good validation of this.
10. Overall, and following positive progress in 2014-15, fewer complaints were upheld during 2015-16 with 77% not upheld compared to 63% in 2014-15.
11. Analysis of causes of complaints received shows the main areas complained about being “sensitivity / empathy of staff” and “Professional Decision making” Both of these areas did however have the lowest likelihood of being upheld at 18%.
12. During the year, six complaints were received directly by children or young people. This is a reduction on previous year and this figure remains low. The Complaints Manager does however meet quarterly with Childrens Rights Officers and has access to cases they are supporting informally. This is to ensure and validate that young persons are not blocked in any way from accessing the formal complaints procedure.
13. 91% of complaints at Stage 1 were responded to within the statutory maximum of 20 working days. This is identical performance to 2014-15. Encouragingly there was a significant improvement in responses made within the best practice 10 working day target (up by 16%).
14. The Local Government Ombudsman investigated nine complaints relating to Childrens Social Care during 2015-16 and found fault in two instances. Details of these are included within the main report.

### **Compliments received**

15. The Complaints Manager also captures and records compliments regarding the work of the children’s social care teams. This can provide a helpful balance and assist in identifying and building on what works well.
16. Twenty-five compliments were received and forwarded to the complaints manager during 2015-16 slightly down on last year (31) Fresh reminders have been issued to all services of the importance of recognising and sharing positive feedback and to bring balance to the annual report. A selection of the comments received reflecting the positive feedback we receive is included within the main report.

### **Recurring themes with regard to complaints**

17. The following key learning points are highlighted by the Complaints team as recurring themes:

- Timeliness of providing conference papers and minutes
- Issues with being able to contact social workers

18. The above themes have been discussed with senior managers and actions have been taken to address the issues.

### **Specific Actions to be taken to improve performance**

19. In addition to the above and in response to the complaints received, the following actions have been recommended for the department to consider:

- Improve our case recording within the social care database to ensure greater transparency around why decisions have been made
- Consider how we prepare our workers for being subject to complaints investigations particularly at the Independent stages
- Look at how we can better articulate to the public that complaints are making a difference to how we deliver services.

### **Resource Implications**

20. The annual report outlines the costs incurred through the complaints procedure were £15,130, an increase of £2000 on 2014/15.

21. 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**

22. Overall, this has been a positive year for complaints management across children's social care services. The decisions made by the Local Government Ombudsman provide validation that, for the most part, where errors are made this is recognised and redressed appropriately.

23. The Complaints Manager reports quarterly to the Senior Leadership Team as well as holding monthly one to one sessions with the Assistant Director to flag and discuss any emerging themes.

### **Circulation under the Local Alert Issues Procedure**

24. None.

**Officers to contact**

Paul Meredith  
Interim Director, Children and Family Services  
0116 305 7441  
[paul.meredith@leics.gov.uk](mailto:paul.meredith@leics.gov.uk)

Sharon Cooke  
Interim Assistant Director  
0116 305 5479  
[sharon.cooke@leics.gov.uk](mailto:sharon.cooke@leics.gov.uk)

Simon Parsons  
Complaints Manager, Corporate Resources  
0116 305 6243  
[simon.parsons@leics.gov.uk](mailto:simon.parsons@leics.gov.uk)

**List of Appendices**

Appendix A – Childrens Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments: Annual Report  
- April 2015-March 2016.

**Equality and Human Rights Implications**

25. None arising directly from this report.