



CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

Subject Heading:

Children & Young People's Services
Annual Complaints Report 2015/16

CMT Lead:

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Policy context:

Quality and high customer satisfaction

SUMMARY

The Children & Young People's Services Complaints Annual report, attached as Appendix 1 provides information about the numbers and types of complaints handled by the Children and Young People's Service during 2015/16, as well as Members' correspondence. It is a requirement under the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 that the complaints annual report be published.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Members note the contents of the attached report and the continued efforts made by the service to learn from complaints with the increasing demands on the service with the number of children having some involvement with Children and Young People's Services.
2. That Members note the recommendations identified from complaints and continued monitoring of these to ensure that actions are implemented to evidence service improvements.

REPORT DETAIL

3. There has been a slight increase in the number of complaints of 6% in 2015/16 (74) compared to 70 in 2014/15 and Ombudsman enquiries in

2015/16 (5) compared to 3 in 2014/15,). The majority of complaints were made by parents with 14% (10) being made by children directly or via an advocate. There has been a continuing trend with Stage 1 complaints increasing, however Stage 2 complaints are reducing with the positive outcomes achieved through meeting with complainants. Although some requests for Stage 2 could not be progressed due to Court proceedings.

4. There have been increases in complaints across Fostering, Over 12's, 'Triage/MASH & Assessment' and 'Safeguarding & Service Standards Unit'(SSSU). These are reflective of the increased number of fostering enquiries during 2015/16 (four times that of the previous year), those children on Child Protection Plans, 25% increase, and the increased activity experienced by Children & Young People's Services.
5. With the changes in Children & Young People's Services, this may have impacted on the level of service provided, as the number of complaints relating to the 'level of service' increased from 11 in 2014/15 to 28 in 2015/16.. Although there was a decrease in the number of children coming into care, there was an increase in activity across the Service which may have also impacted on this.
6. During 2015/16 the Children with Disabilities Team moved to Learning & Achievement becoming Children & Adults Disabilities (CAD) Team, therefore recording of these complaints are reported within the Learning & Achievement Annual Complaints report.
7. The increase of 25% in complaints regarding 'attitude/behaviour of staff', were mainly in relation to the decisions made, although there were also issues around 'lack of communication'.
8. There are still some difficulties experienced with the recording and reporting of outcomes for social care complaints, however 'explanation/information provided' has the highest number and may also be a result of the changes within the Service and turnover of staff.
9. Response times have been impacted due to the complexity of complaints, with a drop of 11% in those responded to within 10 working days and those responded to over 20 working days have doubled. It should be noted that within the statutory framework it allows for an extension to 20 working days. Where this is required holding letters are provided. Steps have been taken to see how this can be addressed by the Complaints Team through improved monitoring.
10. There were no Stage 2 or Stage 3 Review Panels for 2015/16, which could be reflective of the face-to-face meetings undertaken to de-escalate complaints.
11. Although there was expenditure incurred for 2015/16 for independent investigators, this was related to a Stage 2 investigation from the previous year 2014/15.

12. Complainants continue to prefer the use of email and letter to make their complaints, along with telephone contact. Online complaints were made for 2015/16.
13. There have been increases of complaints across age ranges 6-9 and 10-14 and this could be reflective of the activity and the number of children on Child Protection Plans within these age ranges. Children with a learning disability have remained at the same level in 2015/16 as 2014/15. The highest increase has been among children that are 'Mixed White and Black African' in 2015/16 (88%), with a reduction in those that come from 'White British' backgrounds (14%).
14. Members correspondence remains at the same level (24) in 2015/16 as 2014/15 with 58% being responded to within timescale, which has dropped from the previous year where there was a 78% response rate.
15. Compliments have increased by 94% (35) in 2015/16 compared to 2014/15 (18), which is mainly contributable to feedback evaluation forms from the Family Intervention Team. Teams are encouraged to continue to send compliments to the Complaints Team to be logged.
16. With the changes in the Service, it is important to ensure that complaints continue to play a role in providing a good source of information to help identify areas for improvement. The Service are taking steps towards the retention of staff through their 'Face to Face' vision. Also have introduced an app for children to express their wishes/views and concerns called MOMO (Mind of My Own), which the Complaints Team have linked into and will be monitoring through 2016/17 in relation to concerns/complaints raised by children.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

There is a Complaints & Information team within the Directorate. This team addresses complaints received and manages associated resource implications, which are funded from within overall service budgets.

There are no new financial implications or risks arising from this report, which is for information purposes.

Legal implications and risks:

There are no apparent legal implications from noting this Report. The complaints process is governed by the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.

Human Resources implications and risks:

The Children's Services department have identified actions to be followed through with the qualified workforce to ensure that the learning from the complaints received is firmly embedded into the training and supervision of social work staff and also addressed through the Council's Performance Development Review (PDR) process

Equalities implications and risks:

The report demonstrates that there is a transparent and structured (both informal and formal) route for concerns or complaints, including those relating specifically to bullying, harassment, unfair treatment and/or discrimination against young people, guardians, parents or carers, to be registered for review and action where required.

The Council monitors the diversity profile of complainants and service users against relevant protected characteristics such as age, disability, ethnicity, etc. This data is captured on the CRM system and forms part of the Complaints Annual Report.

In line with the Council's corporate policy on translation and interpreting services, this service also offers information in other languages and alternative formats on request.

We will continue working towards raising awareness on equality and diversity related issues and improving the access to our Complaints, Comments and Compliments policy and procedure.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None