



CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

28 NOVEMBER 2017

Subject Heading:	Children's Services Annual Complaints Report 2016-17
SLT Lead:	Tim Aldridge
Report Author and contact details:	Veronica Webb, 01708 432589 Veronica.webb@havering.gov.uk
Policy context:	An annual report is required as part of the remit of the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006'
Financial summary:	There are no financial implications as this report is for information purposes and is required as part of the statutory complaints regulations

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Communities making Havering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Places making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>
Connections making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>

SUMMARY

The Children's Services Complaints Annual report for 2016/17, attached as Appendix 1 provides information about the numbers and types of complaints handled by the Children's Service during 2016/17, 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 and enable young people to engage with the complaints process.
2. That Members note the recommendations identified from complaints and continued monitoring of these to ensure that actions are implemented to evidence service improvements.
3. That Members note the positive feedback to services received through compliments, highlighting good practice.

REPORT DETAIL

4. Children's Services have made changes in its structure to strengthen its overall functioning and performance over the course of the last 18 months. In addition, the focus of the Service. The focus of social care activity is implementing a systemic family therapy approach which includes professionals spending more "face to face" time with children and families and working in partnership 'with' and not doing 'to' service users. The introduction of this approach, is intended to deliver increasing opportunities for intensive direct work with children, young people and families who access a wide range of services including Early Help (including Edge of Care), Child in Need, Looked After Children or Child Protection.
5. Although Ombudsman enquiries have increased from five in 2015/16 to six in 2016/17, there was one decision for maladministration injustice relating to SEN support, falling within the Children & Adults Disabilities Team coming under the responsibility of the Director of Children's Services.
6. Complaints increased from 74 in 2015/16 to 92 in 2016/17, with 15 of these complaints coming directly from young people, using the MOMO app. One Stage 1 complaint progressed to Stage 2 with no complaints progressing to Stage 3. Enquiries that fall outside the statutory process, has more than doubled in 2016/17.
7. Changes within the structure of Children's Services are designed to support and actively promote the systemic approach and direction of the service. The former configuration of an under 12's team, which now falls under the Intervention & Support Service, saw complaints more than double from 25 in 2015/16 to 52 in 2016/17. The structural change could have been a

contributory factor to the increase, although referrals leading to assessments had increased by 13% from 1,937 to 2,194 and also those looked after increased on average by 5%.

8. However, the main reasons for complaint were in relation to level of service, lack of communication and behaviour of staff, although it should be noted that level of service and behaviour of staff have more than halved from 28 to 13 and from 25 to 11 respectively. As in previous years, complaints relating to behaviour resulted from interventions by social workers following concerns raised about a child(ren).
9. Explanation and information provided were the main outcomes arising from complaints. Children's Services has taken steps to provide information leaflets explaining the process for children and young people on child protection or being looked after. Continued efforts around clear information for parents/carers to give them a clear understanding of the duties and responsibilities of social workers when they intervene are still needed. However face to face complaint meetings have played a part in providing parents/carers with better understanding of why certain actions are taken.
10. In addition, it is clear that a significant improvement in the recruitment and retention of permanent social work staff over the past 12 months (from 40% to 70% permanent workforce) has minimised changes in allocated social workers, which is often a significant contributory factor to dissatisfaction levels
11. The use of the Mind Of My Own (MOMO) participation app by young people is increasing and it is encouraging that young people are using the app to raise their concerns, although email or telephone were alternative methods also used to make their complaints. The main theme was lack of support/advice for those leaving care and in particular the early part of 2016/17 related to the transfer of savings on turning 18. Children's Services acted quickly by identifying those that were soon to be 18 and taking responsibility for ensuring savings were paid.
12. Response times had not improved as anticipated, with the increase in numbers and complexity. The Complaints & Information Team is working with Children's Services to review processes to improve response times.
13. Expenditure incurred for 2016/17 was £9,432 resulting from the Stage 2 investigation, due to the complexity and length of the investigation undertaken.
14. The preferred method of contact during 2016/17 was by email (33), although this was slightly down from 2015/16 (35), with those using the telephone more than doubling from 11 in 2015/16 to 28 in 2016/17. Online complaints more than doubled in 2016/17 which includes those complaints received via the MOMO app.

15. There was an increase across complaints received for children 0-5 years and 18-24 years. Children on a Child in Need Plan under the age of one almost doubled with an average of 12 in 2015/16 to an average of 22 in 2016/17, which may have contributed to the increase in this age group. Complaints regarding savings may have contributed to the increase in those aged 18-24. Information regarding disability shows a high number unknown and CYPS will need to explore the reasons for this. There were increases shown across White British, Mixed White & Asian and Mixed White & Black.
16. Member enquires almost trebled in 2016/17 with 75% being responded to within timescale.
17. Compliments have decreased from 35 in 2015/16 to 16 in 2016/17. The Complaints & Information Team will need to remind and encourage staff to send this to the team for recording.
18. There is a continued trend of increased complaints, member enquires and general enquires for Children's Services which has impacted on response times. Children's Services continue to use complaints as an important feedback resource and enabling young people to play a more active part in developing the service.

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. It should be noted however that any material increase in investigations following on from complaints could result in additional costs to the authority, which is being managed as part of the overall financial management responsibilities of the service.

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

There are no background papers