

CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 September 2015

Subject Heading:

Report Author and contact details:

Policy context:

Children Adults & Housing (Children
and Young People's Services)
Annual Complaints and Compliments
Report 2014/15
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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 2014/15, as well as Members' correspondence and how they were dealt with.

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 demands on the service through the increasing numbers of children coming under the responsibility of the local authority.
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. Appendix 1 shows a high increase of Stage 1 complaints in 2014/15 compared to 2013/14 of 40%, which may be reflective of the increase in the number of children coming under the responsibility of Children & Young People's Services.
4. The increase in the number of Stage 1 complaints involving 'Under 12's' has doubled in 2014/15 compared to 2013/14 and '12+' and 'Leaving Care' have increased by 63% in 2014/15.
5. Although again for 2014/15 the majority of Stage 1 complaints were made by parents/carers/grandparents, there has been a slight increase in the number of children making the complaints directly in 2014/15. The main reason for complaint was 'behaviour of staff' and this may be reflective of the high turnover of staff within Children & Young People's Services, which may improve with stability in the workforce. 'Lack of communication' was the next highest involving children not in the care of their parents and was mainly around contact arrangements or placements.
6. The main outcomes 'explanation given' and 'apology', were linked to the 'behaviour of staff' and 'lack of communication and further clarification and understanding by the complainant was required and meetings held proved successful. Assessments/reviews were also undertaken as appropriate to resolve complaints at Stage 1.
7. The number of Stage 1 complaints responded to within 10 working days has improved by 29% in 2014/15 compared to 2013/14 and within 20 working days by 35%. However compared to the number of complaints response times are still low i.e. 40% within 10 working days and 37% within 20 working days. The statutory timescale allows for up to 20 working days which gives a 77% response time. However those complaints responded to outside of the 20 working days increased in 2014/15.
8. Of the nine Stage 2 requests, eight were successfully resolved through meetings with only one progressing to investigation.
9. The recommendation/outcome at Stage 2 was in relation to support for Special Guardians and clarification of roles between the Complaints Team and Service Area.
10. There were two Stage 3 Review Panels, one which involved complaint rolled over from 2013/14, the other requested in late 2014/15.
11. Where a complaint does not fall within the statutory framework they are recorded as Corporate complaints. Of the 17 complaints received, 65%

were responded to within timescale. There has been a slight increase in the number of Corporate complaints for 2014/15.

12. Expenditure for 2014/15 totalled £3,006.97 with £2,210.72 being costs for independent investigators and £796.25 for publicity/leaflets.
13. The most preferred method of contact for 2014/15 was by telephone with email the next. In previous years the way complaints and compliments received were recorded, however these will only include complaints in future as has been done in 2014/15.
14. Complaints relating to children between the ages of 0-5 increased by 60% and continued the trend from 2013/14. However in 2014/15 the next highest increase (42%) was among children aged 10-14, whereas in 2013/14 this was among children aged 6-9. The breakdown of ethnicity with 'White British' being reflective of the borough's population, however there was an increase in the number with 'mixed background' from 2013/14. Complaints involving children with a disability remained around the same level in 2014/15. 'Not declared' across age, disability and ethnicity has decreased in 2014/15 showing an improvement from 2013/14.
15. Members' correspondence has decreased slightly in 2014/15 to 24 with 18 (75%) being responded to within timescale compared to 67% in 2013/14..
16. Compliments have decreased by 54% in 2014/15 and staff will need to be reminded to send compliments to the Complaints Team to log. Most compliments were for the care and support given, with Early Help and Under 12s receiving the highest number of compliments.
17. Demand on Children & Young People's Services increased in 2014/15 as in 2013/14 with high levels of staff turnover within the Service. Complaints continue to increase and the Service has continued to use meetings successfully to resolve complaints.
18. Recommendations and actions identified as a result of complaints have been monitored and some actions have been implemented and others are being progressed.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

There is a Complaints, Information and Communication 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