



Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee 10 November 2011

REPORT

Subject Heading:

Social Care and Learning (Children and Young People's Services) Annual Complaints and Compliments Report 2010/11

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SUMMARY

The report provides information about the numbers and types of complaints handled by the Children and Young People's Service during 2010/11 and how they were dealt with to minimise the impact of justifiable concerns and to reduce the likelihood of future complaints.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To note the content of the report and the attached appendix 1 that sets out the position for 2010/11.

REPORT DETAIL

1.0 Introduction

The separate Appendix 1 contains the summary report on the position regarding service complaints handled in relation to the Children and Young People's Services during the period 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011. It also shows the compliments received.

2.0 Key Issues

The reason for reporting complaints on Children and Young People's Services separately is because they are handled under specific regulations that individually define the statutory process into 3 formal stages (Stage 1, 2 and 3). Havering introduced an informal Pre Stage 1 process in 2005 to support a better complaints practice and avoid complaints escalating to statutory processes.

Some of the key messages that arise from the report during 2010/11 are that:

- The overall number of complaints are around 176 (46 matters raised by MP's and Councillors). There has been a significant increase in statutory Stage 1 complaints in comparison to the previous year 2009/10 (table 1 page 7 of appendix 1).
- The Pre Stage 1 process (40) has been very successful in resolving many initial concerns, with both more handled through that process and with none moving from that stage to the formal stage 1 process.
- Matters raised through Councillor or MP routes are monitored through these processes (page 4 of appendix 1, see table 1 on page 7).
- The overall number of Stage 1 complaints has increased from the previous year by 32. The reason being the Children with Disability Team have reviewed service user's packages of care which have led to numerous complaints from parents. There has been an increase in complaints made by the Children's Advocacy Service (page 7 of appendix 1, see table 1 - 4).

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- The number of Stage 1 complaints, that escalated to a Stage 2 complaint had increased in 2010/11 by 6 complex complaints (page 7 - 8 of appendix table 1, 2, 3 and 5).
- There were two Stage 3 complaints for the financial year 2010/11. However one has rolled over to 2011/12 due to the complexity. (pages 7- 8 of appendix 1, see table 1, 2, 3 and 6).
- For 2010/11 7 Compliments were received, these are in relation to the good work Children and Young People's Services have carried out (page 7 & 9 of appendix 1 and table 1 and 7).
- 7 complaints were submitted to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). The outcomes from these complaints were: 4 referred back as a premature complaint and investigated locally as a statutory Stage 1 complaint. 1 complaint was investigated by the LGO and no maladministration was found. 1 LGO Discretion – no or insufficient injustice. 1 LGO on going.
- Most complaints are initiated by parents and very few by children and young people.
- The majority of complaints relate to the alleged behaviour of staff or the quality of service.
- A number of future actions have been identified as a result of the Annual Complaints and Compliments Report 2010/11. These are set out on page 7 of the appendix 1. Most are continuous development matters, but with one or two specific new actions. Key is the continuation of a staff training programme.

3.0 Future Arrangements

Currently, the Council has a corporate complaints model that captures non social care complaints, principally education, children services activity. Attached to that are separate regulated processes, for the Children's Social Care and Adult Social Care (inc. health aspects) Service. These complaints systems are statutory and have separate defined and differing regulated processes.

There has been a major restructure within Social Care & Learning Directorate, whereby Children's and Adult complaints have now merged. It is envisaged that the annual report of 2011/12 will include combined data and more effective comparisons about performance in managing and dealing with complaints across all services. Proposals are being considered to bring complaints services within Social Care and Learning (Learning and Achievement, Adult Social Care and Children and Young People's Services) together in the future and as part of that change consideration will be given to how a wider service report can be provided.



IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

The Children's Complaints Service has a small annual operational budget of £14,460. That includes the need on occasion to commission Independent People, which is the least predictable cost associated with the service. There are no new financial implications or risks arising from this report.

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:

There are no new HR implications or risks arising from this report.

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 matters of equality of treatment, to be registered for review and action where required.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 attached which draws on the electronic and paper recording systems held within the Social Care and Learning Directorate.