



Havering
LONDON BOROUGH

CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

8 DECEMBER 2020

Subject Heading:	Children's Services Annual Complaints Report 2019-20
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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	[x]
Places making Havering	[]
Opportunities making Havering	[]
Connections making Havering	[]

SUMMARY

The Children's Services Complaints Annual report for 2019-20, attached as Appendix 1 provides information about the numbers and types of complaints handled by the Children's Service during 2019-20, 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

1. Complaints in 2019-20 decreased by 25% in 2019-20(80) compared to 2018-19(106). With a small number of complaints made by young people (8). The number of enquiries more than trebled relating to ongoing Court proceedings or Court decisions outside of Children's Services remit. There continues to be a steady number of complaints escalating to Stage 2 investigations in 2019-20 (6) and is at the same level as in 2018-19.
2. Many complaints received continue to be regarding the unwelcomed intervention of Children's Services and reflected in Intervention & Support Services receiving the highest number of complaints in 2019-20 and 'attitude/behaviour of staff' being the highest reason. There has been a decrease of complaints received by Triage MASH & Assessments by 59% in 2019-20(13) compared to 2018-19(32).
3. In 2019-20 complaints regarding 'inaccurate information' decreased significantly by 77% (5) compared to 2018-19 (22) resulting from continued audits and quality assurance by Team Managers during the assessment process. Children's Services continue to use the Quality Assurance framework and other feedback loops to gauge standards provided to children and families.
4. The number of complaints upheld and partially upheld accounted for 24% (19) and 15% (12) respectively of the total complaints. Those upheld or partially upheld resulted in an apology, linked to the need to provide explanation or further information about the reasons for intervention or particular parts of the

process that initially may not have been clear. How information is given, and the consistency should be explored.

5. Complaints received were mainly by email (38) with the next preferred method by telephone (22). Response times improved in 2019-20 with 67% (51) responded to within the 20 working day timeframe. Efforts will continue to improve response times, while recognising the increased complexities of cases and balancing the priorities of the service.
6. Increased expenditure in 2019-20 for Independent Investigators of £19,531.65 resulted from Stage 2 investigations carried over from 2018-19 and costs associated with Stage 3 Review Panels. Payments made as resolutions to complaints totalled £8,200 in 2019-20.
7. Monitoring information is based on the child(ren) within the family unit in which a complaint was made. There were increases of those aged between 15-17 and 18+ in 2019-20. Male children were higher across most age groups except 0-5 and 15-17. Children recorded with a disability was low across all ages, and diagnosed with mainly Autism or Aspergers Syndrome. 'White British' children highest representation and reflects the borough's population make up with 'White and Black Caribbean' and 'any other Black Background' increasing in 2019-20. Children of 'Catholic, 'Christian' or 'Church of England' faiths increased in 2019-20.
8. The number of compliments received is very low in 2019-20 and disappointing, although it is not representative of the good work that is happening within Children's Services. Compliments to be logged to ensure these can be reported in 2020-21.
9. Complaints are playing an important role in service improvements, and this is evident with the number of complaints regarding inaccurate information showing a significant decrease in 2019-20. The Children's Service Improvement Board will continue to look at quality assurance and learning from complaints, whilst also linking to appropriate training.

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 Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to:

- (i) the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (ii) the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- (iii) foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'Protected characteristics' are: age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment. The missing categories not reported within the 2019-20 report will be reported on in future reports.

The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.