

## PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE – 6 September 2022

<b>Subject Heading:</b>	Children’s Services Annual Complaints and Compliments Report 2021-22
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<b>Policy context:</b>	As part of the remit of the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006’
<b>Financial summary:</b>	There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However adverse performance against some performance indicators may have financial implications for the Council.

### 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**

Local authorities have a statutory requirement to set up a complaints process which is set out in section 26 Children Act 1989 and The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 and to publish an Annual Report.

The Children's Services Annual Complaints and Compliments Report for 2021–22, attached as Appendix 1, sets out Children's Services statutory complaints and compliments received during this period, as well as Members' correspondence.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That Members note the content of the Children's Services Annual Complaints and Compliments Report 2021-22 attached as Appendix 1.
2. That Members note the continued learning from complaints and the recognition of good practice through compliments.

## **REPORT DETAIL**

1. The 2021-22 report shows improvements in children's services with the number of complaints raised against the service, decreasing by 10% compared to 2020-21. Alongside a reduction in the number of enquiries made in the year. There continued to be a consistent number of complaints escalating to Stage 2 investigations compared to 2020-21. No complaints were escalated to Stage 3 in year. There were 4 Ombudsman Investigations, of which two were not progressed, one was found to be Maladministration (no injustice), and one Maladministration & Injustice which resulted in a £300.00 good will payment being made.
2. Improvements were seen as the number of complaints against the Triage/MASH & Assessment service which decreased by 22% in 2021/22. Despite the decrease in complaints, it is noted that almost half of the complaints received were in relation to attitude/behaviour of staff and inaccurate information being given or recorded. Although a large number were not upheld. However, the Intervention Support Service saw a significant increase (27%) in the number of complaints in 2020/21 compared to 2021/22.
3. The increase in complaints received by Intervention Support were primarily linked to attitude/behaviour of staff, lack of communication, and standard of service not met. As stated in the report the availability and capacity of staff

has continued to be the biggest challenge for Children's Services. The reporting year to the Department for Education ending 30 September 2021 saw a 75% increase in leavers compared with the year before, contributing to an increase in our turnover rate, from 14.1% in 2020 to 24.9% in 2021.

4. As stated 2021-22 saw complaints regarding 'attitude/behaviour of staff' increased by 27% compared to 2020-21. However, given the challenges many families have been facing with the cost of living crises and high levels of this is not unexpected. There have been significant improvements in the number of complaints received for inaccurate information reducing by 75% in 2021/22 compared to 2020/21. There has also been improvements in lack of communication and standard of service not met.
5. A large increase in the volume of contacts in September 2021 coincided with a large number of complaints from partners and families in relation to a lack of communication. Several strategies were put in place with partners to address the issues around communication and access to senior managers to address any issues. A lack of IT equipment including mobile telephones for SW's has been addressed by escalation from the Director of Children's Services.
6. The number of complaints upheld and partially upheld accounted for 44% (17) and (18) 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. It is important to note that there has been a significant increase, 64% in the number of complaints upheld, 17 in 2021/22 compared to 6 in 2020/21.
7. Response times have declined in 2021/22 with 30% (24) responded to within the 10 working day timeframe, 35.4% (28) within 11-20 days and 34% (38) taking over 20 days. Efforts will continue to improve response times, while recognising the increased complexities of cases and balancing the priorities of the service. Complaints continue to be received by email (37) as the preferred method with the next preferred method being online (24).
8. Monitoring information is based on the child(ren) within the family unit in which a complaint was made. During 2021-22 there a decrease across ages 0-5, and 10-14 with an increase of complaints involving children age 6-9, 15-17, and 18+. the highest increase being in the age group of 15-17. There are a low number of children that had a recorded disability, with the majority having Autism/Aspergers syndrome in 2021-22, which is similar to 2020-21. We know that overall we have low numbers of children accessing SEN Support in Schools, however the number of requests for Education, Health and Care Plan assessments has increased and we expect to see this continue in 2022/23. White British children have the highest representation and reflects the borough's population make up.

9. The number of compliments received in 2021-22 is lower than we would like (16) however this could be more about compliments not being shared with SCCI. Continued efforts to encourage staff within Children's Services to share compliments so these can be logged to reflect more accurately the good work being done.
10. The Complaints and Compliments action plan has been refreshed and will be monitored at quarterly meetings between the Social Care Complaints and Information Team, and the Children's Services Senior Management Team

## IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

### **Financial implications and risks:**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However adverse performance against some performance indicators may have financial implications for the Council.

All service directorates are required to achieve their performance targets within approved budgets. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is actively monitoring and managing resources to remain within budgets, although several service areas continue to experience significant financial pressures in relation to a number of demand led services, such as Children's Services. SLT officers are focused upon controlling expenditure within approved directorate budgets and within the total General Fund budget through delivery of savings plans and mitigation plans to address new pressures that are arising within the year.

### **Legal implications and risks:**

As stated in the Report the Authority has a duty to set up a representations process under s 26 (3) Children Act 1989.

There are no legal implications in noting the content of the Annual Report.

### **Human Resources implications and risks:**

The recommendations made in this report do not give rise to any identifiable HR risks or implications that would affect either the Council or its workforce.

### **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.

## **People Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee, 6 September 2022**

Note: 'Protected characteristics' are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex/gender, and sexual orientation.

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. The policy contains a breakdown of complaints received.