

Department: Children, Schools and Families

Date: 11 March 2021

Subject: Children's Social Care Complaints Annual Review

Introduction

Background

Local authorities are legally required to establish complaints procedures to deal with complaints about their statutory social care functions. The Children Act 1989 covers the complaints procedure for children and young people. The Department for Skills and Education's guidance 'Getting the best from complaints' outlines what procedures local authorities must have in place.

Purpose

To review the complaints process over a 12 month period in order to provide the council with the means to keep itself informed about complaint trends and how effective the current complaints handling process is. The report includes statistical data and offers an analysis of what the complaints information means for the council.

This report covers the period between 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, including a summary of identified issues, examples of service improvement and details of future objectives for 2020/21.

1. Report & executive summary

- 1.1 Complaints are recognised as a valuable tool in helping officers to learn and understand the concerns of residents in the delivery of services and have an important role in both supporting the improvement of those services and holding services to account.
- 1.2 The report will be published on the council's website and made available on request.

2. Details

- 2.1 Complaints, including Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) complaints are monitored by the Complaints team. Performance for the number of complaints dealt with in time, the number of complaints

escalated to Stage 2 and LGSCO complaints answered in time are corporate performance indicators.

- 2.2 There is both a statutory and non-statutory process in place for dealing with complaints that fall under Children’s Social Care teams.
- 2.3 The statutory procedure in place has a three stage process. Stage 1 is an investigation carried out by the relevant service manager within 10 working days (can be extended to 20 working days if needed). If the person complaining remains dissatisfied they can request a Stage 2 independent investigation. The council will appoint an Investigating Officer and Independent Person to undertake this investigation. If the complainant still remains unhappy with this, they can request a Stage 3 review panel, chaired by an independent Panel Chair.
- 2.4 The council’s corporate complaints procedure applies to all non-social care complaints.
- 2.5 The council will provide advice and support and work with complainants and council services to find an effective and swift resolution to complaints.

3. Stage One Complaints received

- 3.1 The total number of Stage 1 statutory and non-statutory Children Social Care complaints received in 2019/20 are below.

Stage 1 Statutory	2019/20	Upheld/ Partially Upheld	Responded to on time	% responded to on time
Looked after children (LAC) & Permanency & Care Leavers	7*	3	5	71%
Safeguarding & Care Planning	2	1	0	0%
14+ Team	1	0	0	0%
Total	10	4	5	50%

*one complaint from a young person

Stage 1 Non-Statutory	2019/20	Upheld/ Partially Upheld	Responded to on time	% responded to on time
LAC & Permanency & Care Leavers	4	4	2	50%
Safeguarding & Care Planning	3	2	1	33%
14+ Team	1	0	0	0%
MASH & Child protection (CP)	7	5	4	57%
Access To Resources & Children with disabilities (CWD)	2	1	2	100%
Quality Assurance	1	1	0	0%

Total	17	13	9	53%
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3.2 The types of complaints received are as follows:-

LAC, Permanency & Care Leavers

- Lack of actions from team / Social Worker.
- Delays in informing parents of actions and delays in getting minutes of meeting out.
- Support as a care leaver.

MASH & CP

- Dissatisfied MASH will not reopen case.
- Unhappy with content of correspondence.

Safeguarding & Care Planning

- Lack contact from Social Worker.

14+ Team

- Lack of communication
- Lack of contact from Social worker

These can be put into the below themes:-

- **Policy and Decision** – usually relates to an outcome of an assessment or a service request that has not been agreed with.
- **Staff Attitude** – primarily around customer service issues such as calls, messages, emails, etc. not being responded to in a timely manner, or where someone said they would do something; but did not.
- **Poor Quality** – mainly about the quality of reports, administration of case management or adherence to timescales.
- **No Provision** – where a service was agreed but not provided.
- **Level of Provision** – complaints about the level of care or support or support packages.

3.4 Reasons why complaints were upheld or partially upheld are as follows:-

- Correspondence / calls were not responded to either in good time or at all.
- Minutes not provided on time.
- Service not provided correctly, provision missing or not provided as it should be.

- Breakdown in relationship with Social Worker.
- Actions should have been proactive rather than reactive in order to try and prevent delays in provision of service.

Outcomes

3.5 Where complaints are being upheld or partially upheld, it is required that the response will state the outcome and what actions will be taken to rectify the matter. Examples of the remedies Children’s Social Care have put in place are as follows:-

- Discussion with the teams about the importance of responding to correspondence and returning calls.
- Terminology used by professionals is not always as clear for parents, this to be changed in future.
- Review support and advice offered.
- Support will be offered in a more timely matter.
- Meetings would not take place without notification.
- Minutes would be issued via email as well as hard copy to prevent delays.

4. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Enquiries

4.1 In 2019/20, the LGSCO investigated two complaints relating to Children’s Social Care. These complaints are detailed in the LGSCO report.

5. Compliments

5.1 The following compliments were received for Children’s Social Care teams in 2019/20

Team	Number	Themes
Family and Adolescent	4	<p>Social workers have been supportive, interactions have been easy.</p> <p>Social workers speak positively of the family and have worked hard to have a relationship that has a positive impact on them as a whole.</p> <p>Social worker is a positive role model for the children of a family.</p>
Mash and Child Protection	4	<p>All compliments for social workers about how they have been supportive, consistent and ensured families knew what was happening.</p>

Permanency, Placements and Looked after Children	2	Thanks and comments about how social worker has been easy to access and responsive over the years. Peer on peer compliment about a sensitive placement.
Safeguarding	3	Praise and gratitude for how Social Worker assisted and managed cases. Peer on peer compliment about how their style and work has helped a family achieved best outcomes.
Social Work Intervention	2	Praise how officer handled a complex conference. Praise for how well a Child Protection Conference was handled especially given the many different strands that had to be considered.
Totals	15	

6. Next steps

- 6.1 Learning from complaints, needs to be more rigorous and evidenced in the response and in our revised procedures.
- 6.2 A refresh on the information available on how to complain on the council's website will be undertaken, to ensure it is accessible to all.
- 6.3 There is a new referral and chasing process in place for children's social care complaints to help to drive up response times.

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