

Report for: Information



Contains Confidential or Exempt Information	NO - Part I
Title	Adults and Children's Services Annual Complaints 2014/15 and 2015/16
Responsible Officer(s)	Jacqui Hurd, Head of Customer Services
Contact officer, job title and phone number	Claire Burns, Complaints Co-ordinator Adult and Children's Social Care, 01628 683857
For Consideration By	Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel
Date to be Considered	16 November 2016
Implementation Date if Not Called In	Not Applicable
Affected Wards	None

REPORT SUMMARY

1. This report provides an overview of the performance of the Council in respect of receiving, handling and responding to complaints received to Adult and Children Services.
2. The report covers the periods 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 and 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016. It also reports on the compliments received by staff for each service.
3. It recommends that Members note and comment on performance especially the learning derived from this and the improvements made to the service as a result.
4. These recommendations are being made to ensure that the Council meets its statutory responsibilities to publish performance on complaints received to Adult and Children's Services Social Care.
5. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

If recommendations are adopted, how will residents benefit?

Benefits to residents and reasons why they will benefit	Dates by which residents can expect to notice a difference
1. Residents are aware of the performance of the Council in respect of handling and responding to complaints received and how services have been amended as a result.	Immediately upon publication of this report.

1. DETAILS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note performance of the Council in respect of receiving, handling and responding to complaints received during the periods 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 and 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

2. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION(S) AND OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Option	Comments
The Council does not produce an annual report on complaints performance for Adults and Children's Social Care This is not recommended	There is a statutory responsibility for the Council to report on its performance on an annual basis
The Council produces an annual report summarising performance in the way it handles and responds to complaints received to the Children's and Adults Services Social Care function. This is the recommended option	It ensures the Council meets its statutory obligations whilst also ensuring that local policies on transparency are adhered to.

2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 To meet statutory responsibilities and ensure customer care the Council runs a complaints service covering statutory adult and statutory children's social care complaints.
- 2.1.2 The council also has a formal corporate complaints service; however there is no statutory responsibility around the formal corporate complaints services.
- 2.1.3 There are strict statutory frameworks in place governing the complaints process for Adult and Children's social care.
- 2.1.4 The management and administration of the social care complaint function sits within the Operations and Customer Services Directorate. This ensures that there is independence between the officer coordinating the investigation and the service areas being investigated.
- 2.1.5 The level of resource devoted to managing the statutory social care complaints process for both Adult and Children Services is 1FTE.
- 2.1.6 It is important to note here that for a period between February 2014 and February 2015 this role was vacant due to the previous post holder leaving and challenges recruiting a suitable alternative. Therefore the recording of the

complaints during this period is not as it should be and the Council has made a conscious push since March 2016 to both raise awareness of the complaints process and improve the recording of complaints being received. Any increase in the number of complaints between 2014-2015 and 2015/16 should therefore not be interpreted as deterioration in the standard of service being delivered. Rather this is more an accurate reflection of record keeping and increased confidence amongst service users to register complaints fully understanding that the Council takes each complaint seriously and is committed to addressing service failings where these have been identified.

- 2.1.7 The full in depth report for Adult and Children’s social care complaints performance for 2014-2015 is detailed at Appendix 1 and for 2015-2016 is detailed at Appendix 2.

2.2 Complaints Activity

- 2.2.1 Tables 1 and 2 show complaints activity across Children’s and Adults Directorates for the years 2014/15 and 2015/16 and compares these with the previously reported activity for 2013-14.

Table 1: Children’s Services

	2013 – 2014	2014 – 2015	2015 - 2016
Stage 1	90	61	81
Stage 2	2	0	5
Stage 3	0	0	2

Table 2: Adult Services

	2013 – 2014	2014 – 2015	2015 - 2016
Stage 1	78	21	44
Stage 2	3	0	4
Stage 3	0	0	1

Children’s Services

- 2.2.2 The timescale for dealing with Stage 1 statutory Children’s Services Social Care complaints is 10 working days. However, this can be extended to 20 working days for more complex complaints or if additional time is required.

2014/15

- 2.2.3 Between April 2014 and March 2015, 61 statutory stage 1 complaints were referred to children’s social care services for investigation. This is less than in 2013-14 when 90 statutory stage 1 complaints were received.

- 2.2.4 Of the 61 complaints that were received during 2014/15, 46% were responded to within timescales.

2015/16

- 2.2.5 During the period 2015-2016, 81 statutory stage 1 complaints were referred to children’s social care services for investigation. This is more than in 2014/15 when 61 statutory stage 1 complaints were received.

2.2.6 Of the 81 complaints that were received during 2015/16, 42% were responded to within timescales.

2.2.7 In summary stage 1 complaints made have fallen from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016, this is a reflection of excellent work undertaken by service professionals to resolve any issues raised at the earliest point putting our residents first. However there is an increase in stage 2 and stage 3 received in 2015/16, these are all from complaints started in 2014/15 and this is linked back to the period where there was not an active complaints co-ordinator in post. This has now been resolved.

2.2.8 It is identified that there needs to be an improvement in the numbers responded to within the timeframes agreed. Failing to respond within time is likely to be that more time is needed to investigate and this is not negotiated at an early opportunity, this now forms part of the training and complaints monitoring.

Adult Services

2.2.9 There is no specific timescale for dealing with statutory adults services social care complaints. The timescales are negotiated between the complaints team, the manager of the service being investigated and the customer making the complaint.

2.2.10 The council is committed where possible to achieve early resolutions for statutory adults services social care complaints. The measurement used is the same as the timescales for statutory children's services complaints which is 10 working days but can be negotiated up to 20 working days.

2014/15

2.2.11 During the period 2014-2015, 21 statutory complaints were referred to Adults Social Care for investigation. This is 73% less than in 2013-14 when 78 complaints were received.

2.2.12 Of the 21 statutory stage 1 complaints that were received, 57% were responded to within 10 – 20 working days.

2015/16

2.2.13 During the period 2015-2016, 44 statutory complaints were referred to Adults Social Care for investigation. This is an increase of 109% on 2014-2015 when 21 complaints were received.

2.2.14 Of the 44 statutory complaints that were referred to Adults Social Care for investigation 42% were responded to within 10 – 20 working days.

2.2.15 In summary stage 1 complaints made have fallen considerably from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016, this is a reflection of excellent work undertaken by service professionals to resolve any issues raised at the earliest point putting our residents first.

2.2.16 It is identified that there needs to be an improvement in the numbers responded to within the timeframes agreed. Failing to respond within time is likely to be that

more time is needed to investigate and this is not negotiated at an early opportunity, this now forms part of the training and complaints monitoring.

2.3 Compliments Activity

2.3.1 In addition to logging complaints, the Council also logs compliments received by clients. Compliments received are feedback to the relevant service area to ensure due recognition is given to staff. Positive practice is also flagged up at the monthly performance meeting to ensure that learning is shared and disseminated across the directorate.

Children's services 2014/15

2.3.2 During the period 2014/15, 10 compliments were recorded by children's services. These related to the exemplary practice, support and interventions within the social care teams.

2015/16

2.3.3 During the period 2015/16, 19 compliments were recorded by children's services. Of these, almost 50% related to events run by the Youth Service.

2.3.4 It is likely that the low number of compliments recorded over the both years constitutes an under-reporting of compliments. Improving this is a priority and more will be done to raise awareness and improve recording practice in this area.

Adult services 2014/15

2.3.5 During the period 2014/15, 61 compliments were recorded by adult services. The majority of these related to the exemplary practice, support and interventions by carers and social workers.

2015/16

2.3.6 During the period 2015/16, 44 compliments were recorded by adult services. The majority of these related to the exemplary practice, support and interventions by the short term team.

2.3.7 While the number of compliments recorded over both years is higher than those recorded by children's services, it is likely that there is still an underreporting of compliments. Improving this remains a priority and more will be done to raise awareness and improve recording practice in this area.

2.4 Local Government Ombudsman Investigations

Children's Services 2014/15

2.4.1 The Local Government Ombudsman referred three statutory complaints in 2014/15.

2015/16

2.4.2 The Local Government Ombudsman referred eight statutory complaints in 2015/16.

**Adults services
2014/15**

2.4.3 The Local Government Ombudsman referred one statutory complaint.

2015/16

2.4.4 The Local Government Ombudsman referred five statutory complaints.

2.5 Quality Assurance

2.5.1 The Complaints Co-ordinator produces quarterly reports to the Strategic Director for Adults and Children's social care services and the senior management team on Social Care complaints received, the subject of complaints and any emerging themes, including whether they were upheld or not, performance against timescale and any agreed actions or learning.

2.6 Learning from Complaints

2.6.1 Complaints and concerns provide essential and valuable feedback from our clients and customers. Listening to customers and reflecting on examples of where we have not got it right can reveal or highlight opportunities for improvement (for example, a deficiency in practice, quality of care, assessment processes, communication or indeed service delivery). Even if a complaint is not upheld there can be learning from that complaint with service developments and improvements as a result.

2.6.2 The complaints process and the feedback gained is an integral part of the quality assurance process, which feeds into the development and monitoring of services. Learning from complaints is reviewed by Social Care teams regularly at their team meetings and also forms part of one to one supervision. Below are some examples of learning from complaints in the past year.

2.6.3 Children's services

- Explanations to be clarified for when SAR files are sent.
- Delay and drift around convening conference and lack of paperwork shared with parents in advance of the ICPC.
- Better communication needed.
- RBWM children's social care to ensure that communications happen in a timely manner.

2.6.4 Adults

- Implementing training and systems to try and ensure issues with delays are not repeated.
- Team Manager discussed with Social Worker who reflected on how they may have been perceived.
- Internal communication to be improved around letters/complaints received.
- Ensure staff respond to queries as they arise.

2.6.5 In addition it has been highlighted through training needs identification that staff would like complaints training, this is being delivered throughout November and December and it is clear that we have an opportunity to improve on the response

times, this will be addressed through training and robust monitoring and support with the teams.

2.7 Improving Awareness and Accessibility

2.7.1 The complaints process is a way of engaging service users and their families to provide feedback on services. Complaints information is provided verbally to services users via the social care teams and independent reviewing officers as well as through the complaints co-ordinator, and leaflets on the procedures are available on the RBWM website as hard copies. Information to hand indicates that email is the preferred method that service users choose to use when complaining.

3 KEY IMPLICATIONS

Defined Outcomes	Unmet	Met	Exceeded	Significantly Exceeded	Date they should be delivered by
Publish complaints performance	After 1 December 2016	By 1 December 2016	Between 20 and 30 November 2016	Before 20 November 2016	By 1 December 2016

4. FINANCIAL DETAILS

4.1 Financial impact on the budget

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Upon publication of this report the Council will ensure that it meets its statutory obligations to report on complaints performance for the financial years 2014/15 and 2015/16.

6. VALUE FOR MONEY

6.1 N/A

7. SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT APPRAISAL

7.1 None

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

Risks	Uncontrolled Risk	Controls	Controlled Risk
The Council has insufficient resource dedicated to handling and responding to complaints leading to greater interventions from the Ombudsman	High	The Council has increased the resource into the management of complaints and resilience is built across resources	Low
Staff are unaware of legal responsibilities for handling social care complaints.	Medium	There is training as part of the work programme for the current and next year – a detailed programme of activity to support staff in service departments better understand responsibilities in terms of social care complaints	Low

9. LINKS TO STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

9.1 Work on social care complaints links to the following strategic priorities

Residents First

- Support Children and Young People
- Improve the Environment, Economy and Transport
- Work for safer and stronger communities

Delivering Together

- Enhanced Customer Services
- Deliver Effective Services

Equipping Ourselves for the Future

- Changing Our Culture

10. EQUALITIES, HUMAN RIGHTS AND COMMUNITY COHESION

10.1 Given the frameworks for handling social care complaints are set out by statute – these are equally applied across all communities. Further work needs to be done on gathering and analysing demographic information to ensure equal access to the complaints process and to identify inconsistencies (for instance whether there

is a greater preponderance of complaint from one particular community group). However this needs to be handled sensitively and further work is needed with the service area to ensure this is progressed in the most appropriate manner.

11. STAFFING/WORKFORCE AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None.

12. PROPERTY AND ASSETS

12.1 None.

13. ANY OTHER IMPLICATIONS

13.1 None.

14. CONSULTATION

14.1 None.

15. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

15.1 Not Applicable

Date	Details
N/A	N/A

16. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Adult and Children’s social care complaints performance for 2014-2015
 Appendix 2 - Adult and Children’s social care complaints performance for 2015-2016

17. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

None

18. CONSULTATION (MANDATORY)

Name of consultee	Post held and Department	Date sent	Date received	See comments in paragraph:
Internal				
Alison Alexander	Managing Director/ Strategic Director Adults, Children and Health			
Simon Fletcher	Strategic Director			

Name of consultee	Post held and Department	Date sent	Date received	See comments in paragraph:
	Operations and Customer Services			

REPORT HISTORY

Decision type:	Urgency item?
For information	No

Full name of report author	Job title	Full contact no:
Jacqui Hurd	Head of Customer Services	01628 68 3969