

CHILDRENS SERVICES FEEDBACK ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

To: Children and Young People Committee

Meeting Date: 9 July 2019

From: Executive Director

Electoral division(s): All

Forward Plan ref: n/a **Key decision:** No

Purpose: This report provides a summary of all feedback received in relation to Children's Services, including compliments, enquiries, Member of Parliament and Councillor enquiries and complaints.

Recommendation: To consider the Childrens' Services Feedback Annual Report 2018/19 and request a further report in 12 months

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1. **BACKGROUND**

1.1 In accordance with The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 every Local Authority must;

- Appoint one of their officers as a complaints manager to assist the authority in the co-ordination of all aspects of their consideration of representations;
- Take all reasonable steps to see that everyone involved in the handling and consideration of representations is familiar with the procedure set out in these Regulations (elected members play a primary role in ensuring local accountability); and
- Deal expeditiously in the handling and consideration of representations under these Regulations.

1.2 Every Local Authority must monitor the arrangements that they have made with a view to ensuring that they comply with these Regulations insofar as they regulate the procedure for the consideration of representations under section 26 of the Act, and must as soon as possible after the end of each financial year compile a report on the operation in that year of the procedure set out in these Regulations.

1.3 The Cambridgeshire's Children's Services Annual Report for 2018/19 is attached at Appendix 1. Details of all compliments received during the period are attached at Appendix 2.

2. **MAIN ISSUES**

2.1 The Annual Report details statistical data on the number of compliments, general public enquiries, Member of Parliament (MP) and Councillor (Cllr) enquiries and complaints received and responded to within 2018/19, as well as themes, learning and actions. Details of the Corporate and Statutory Complaints Procedures are set out in Appendix 1 (pages 18-20). A glossary of commonly used abbreviations is included at Appendix 1 (page 21).

2.2 **Context**

2.3 There were a total of 8171 children open to Children's Social Care in this year. The number of complaint cases about which Stage 1 Statutory complaints were received represents 3% of the total cases.

2.4 In summary, the Customer Care Team have seen a 16% increase in compliments (204), with District Social Care Teams receiving the highest at 35% (71).

2.5 For a second year in a row, we have seen an overall decrease in the number of all enquiries (17%), however, within this figure we have seen marginal increases in both Councillor enquiries and MP enquiries, made on behalf of their constituents.

2.6 There has been a 25% increase in Statutory Stage 1 complaints (238), however, despite this there has been a 13% reduction in Statutory Stage 2s worked on throughout the year, with zero Statutory Stage 3s.

2.7 The highest geographical area for Statutory complaints for a second year was South Cambridgeshire which continues to highlight ongoing difficulties with staff recruitment and retention at this end of the County. The highest function area for Statutory complaints was Looked After Children (LAC) services, making up 34% (82) of all Statutory Stage 1 complaints received. 40% (33) of these were from parents (including four adoptive parents) with 21% (17) of complaints received from young people.

2.8 Corporate Children's complaints have seen a 90% increase in Stage 1 complaints received this year from 63 to 120. Despite this significant rise, the number of Corporate Stage 2s and Stage 3s have stayed the same.

2.9 The highest volume of Corporate complaints received for the second year in a row was regarding the Statutory Assessment process (45) which constitutes 38% overall. This is only the second year that the Customer Care Team have collated information regarding Corporate Children's complaints, however we will continue to monitor for emerging trends.

2.10 We have also noticed a significant increase in the number of complainants approaching the Local Government Ombudsman, up from 5 to 13 (160%). Of those investigated and concluded, only 2 were upheld, 4 were not upheld and 5 were deemed to be outside of remit.

Two slightly worrying trends this year that will require further monitoring have been;

- i. The number of complainants who return dissatisfied with their initial complaint response, constituting 28% of all Statutory complaints and 20% of all Corporate complaints. Following receipt of this feedback, their complaint is re-opened at Stage 1, placing an additional burden on the Customer Care Team and Responding Managers.
- ii. Due to staff capacity pressures we have seen a significant increase in the number of complaint responses being sent outside of timescale, with 40% of all Statutory Stage 1s and 45% of all Corporate Stage 1s. These delays often compound complaints raised around Service delays, notwithstanding it can lead to dissatisfaction feedback or escalation requests.

2.11

Themes, Learning and Actions

2.12 The issues and themes raised in complaints are inevitably similar at all three stages of both the Corporate and Statutory Complaints Process. The largest areas of concern relates to Communication (difficulties in reaching worker or messages not being returned) constituting 45% and Worker Behaviour (attitude/manner) 34%. There have been difficulties experienced during and following the recent Children's Change programme with Worker's moving posts or leaving the Service, new Workers not having immediate access to mobile phones or laptops, Teams not having a Team telephone number and insufficient business support. More recently there have been issues with Worker's not logging into their phones or not signposting to others when out of the office.

Some of the notable improvements to service as a result of lessons learned have been;

- All children in special educational provision currently in Year 11 are to be included on the Post 16 spreadsheet for phase transfer in September 2019, to ensure that families are notified of the different transport arrangements for this age group including application and charging policy.
- Changes to reports run as part of the Phase Transfer Process for children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) due to transfer to secondary school the following academic year have been made to ensure the non-resident parent can be consulted.
- Introduction of an automated acknowledgement system, so schools and settings can see if their documentation following an Annual Reviews has been received.
- A new case management system to track Annual Reviews and contact schools where paperwork has not been received has been introduced.
- During the summer (2018) the 14-25yrs Moving-On booklets for young people with complex additional needs have been updated and are now available on the Local Offer.
- A full review of the EHC Plan funding and Childcare Access funding available to settings/parents is now available on The Local Offer.
- All EHC Plan referral outcomes are now shared with the referring school and parents alike.
- Care leavers will now end their involvement with the 14-25 Service with a record of their life.
- When a person enters or leaves a Child Protection Conference, a note of the timing will now be made within the minutes, with a specific note added to the Conference minutes when a recommendation has been made by a professional who has not attended the whole meeting.
- Independent Review Service Manager is now tracking all children placed for adoption and visits each District on a monthly basis to discuss the progress of all cases with the relevant District Safeguarding Managers.
- The Local Offer for Leaving Care has been published and a review into arrangements for Staying Put has been completed.

The Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee reviewed data on complaints relating to Children in Care at its meeting on 22 May 2019 and asked that more information on upheld complaints and the measures taken to address these should be brought back to its next meeting. This will be reviewed by the Sub-Committee on 17 July 2019.

3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 A good quality of life for everyone

There are no significant implications for this priority.

3.2 Thriving places for people to live

There are no significant implications for this priority.

3.3 The best start for Cambridgeshire's Children

There are no significant implications for this priority.

4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Resource Implications

The report above sets out details of significant implications within 2.0 Main Issues under; paragraphs 2.5, 2.7 and 2.10

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

As outlined in section 1.1, under The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006, the Local Authority has a statutory duty to manage and report on complaints.

The Local Government Ombudsman produces data about complaints performance on Local Authorities through the publication of all their decisions on complaints.

The following bullet points set out details of the significant implications identified by the Council's designated Complaints Manager:

- There are ongoing risks associated with instability and capacity of the workforce, causing disruption in the delivery of our Statutory duties.
- As part of the Statutory complaint process, the Complaints Manager should inform the complainant that he has the right to move on to Stage 2 if the time scale has elapsed for Stage 1 and the complainant has not received an outcome. This may mean financing an external, independent investigation into the issues raised.

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.7 Public Health Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

Implications	Officer Clearance
Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?	n/a
Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement?	n/a
Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by LGSS Law?	n/a
Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?	n/a
Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?	n/a
Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact?	n/a
Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health	n/a

Source Documents	Location
Corporate Parenting Sub Committee 22 May 2019	https://cambridgeshire.cmis.uk.com/ccclive/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/1078/Committee/46/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx