

**CHILDRENS SERVICES FEEDBACK ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18**

**To:** Children and Young People Committee

**Meeting Date:** 9 October 2018

**From:** Executive Director: People and Communities

**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, MP/Cllr enquiries and complaints

**Recommendation:** The Committee is recommended to:

- a) consider the content of the report and appendix
- b) 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** Please find attached Cambridgeshire's Children's Services Annual Report for 2017/18 in appendix 1

## **2. MAIN ISSUES**

- 2.1** The Annual Report details statistical data on the number of compliments, general member of public enquiries, Member of Parliament (MP) and Councillor (Cllr) enquiries and complaints received and responded to within 2017/18, as well as themes, learning and actions.
- 2.2** Context
- 2.2.1** There were a total of 7087 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.
- 2.2.2** In summary, the Customer Care Team have seen a 6% drop in compliments (176) with Statutory Assessment and SEND Services receiving the highest at 36%. There has been a 16% (190) increase in statutory stage 1 complaints, however a 33% reduction in statutory stage 2 (due to new measures introduced such as Head of Service meetings) and statutory stage 3s have stayed the same. The highest geographical area for complaints was South Cambridgeshire which coincided with difficulties with staff recruitment and retention. The highest function area for complaints was Child in Need closely followed by Looked After Children (LAC) services, however this was largely attributed to a small cohort of care leavers who all simultaneously made subject access requests and then complained about historical case management issues.

**2.2.3** Having inherited Corporate Children's complaints in April 2017, the Customer Care Team have received 63 stage 1 complaints, 9 stage 2s and 4 stage 3s. The highest volume of Corporate complaints received was regarding the Statutory Assessment process with 30 complaints which constitutes 48% overall. As this is the first year that the Customer Care Team have collated information regarding Corporate Children's complaints, we will monitor carefully over the year to see what changes and trends emerge.

**2.2.4** Despite an overall 23% decrease in the total number of all enquiries, including general member of public and Councillor enquiries, we have seen a 39% increase in MP enquiries on behalf of their constituents, most of which will have already complained through either the Statutory or Corporate complaint process or will go on to complain thereafter.

### **2.3 Themes, Learning and Actions**

**2.3.1** The issues and themes raised in complaints are inevitably similar at all three stages of both the Corporate and Statutory Complaints Process. These largely relate to; Communication (how and when received), Statutory Assessment processes and SEND Services (relating to Education, Health and Care Planning), Social Care Assessments (accuracy), Case Work (adherence to statutory timeframes and guidance), Worker Behaviour (attitude/manner) and Children's Change Programme (turnover of staff). Children's Services have carefully considered the need to reduce changes in social workers for children and families in developing the new team structure, and are already planning communications for children and families to explain the changes, as well as developing the new team structure in a way that will minimise disruption for children and families. Alongside this, the staffing issues in South Cambridgeshire and City are being addressed with care and urgency, and there has been a concerted campaign to recruit quality staff in the face of a national shortage of qualified, experienced social workers. This campaign will see a cohort of new social workers starting with Cambridgeshire in the autumn.

**2.3.2** The learning from complaints, is disseminated to staff via a number of mediums; Bi-Monthly Manager electronic briefings, Quarterly and Annual reporting to Children's and Families Leadership Team, Operational Performance Boards, Newly Qualified Social Worker Training and Workforce Development Training.

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

- The introduction of Information packs to all families at the outset of our involvement;
- A policy outlining the Council's approach to families transferring in from other Authorities where there is an established package of support, in order to better manage expectations;
- The Multi Agency and Safeguarding Hub (MASH) now providing feedback to referrers via email rather than letter;
- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Services now write to parents as *well* as the referring School with their outcome decision over Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) criteria being met;

- The Annual Review pro-forma and associated process for children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or Statement of Educational Needs has now been amended to ensure any proposed amendments are made to the Plan as the discussion takes place, during the Annual Review meeting;
- Case Management Orders are to consistently state that the Local Authority is to serve the completed kinship and viability assessments on the subject together with a letter that confirms how they may challenge the outcome and seek legal support as required;
- Fostering Service to review their procedures and to inform foster carers of available support from Foster Talk.
- A review of the Council's Adoption Support Policy to ensure it is in line with the Adoption Statutory Guidance 2013, specifically in relation to paragraph 9.38 of the guidance with respect to statutory maternity pay or the equivalent for self-employed adopters.

2.3.4 All agreed actions from complaint responses are reviewed at the Assistant Director's performance board, to ensure progress is being made against each.

### **3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

#### **3.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all**

There are no significant implications for this priority.

#### **3.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives**

There are no significant implications for this priority.

#### **3.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people**

There are no significant implications for this priority.

### **4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

#### **4.1 Resource Implications**

#### **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., the Local Authority has a statutory duty to manage and report on complaints.
- The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) provide data about complaints performance on Local Authorities through the publication of all their decisions on complaints.
- The key risks relate to further change and the associated disruption with the distribution of the workforce to meet demand, and the recruitment and retention of qualified/skilled staff.

#### 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.

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

<b>Source Documents</b>	<b>Location</b>
None	