

TO: EXECUTIVE MEMBER CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING
DATE: 9 NOVEMBER 2017

**ANNUAL REPORT – CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING STATUTORY
ANNUAL COMPLAINTS, CONCERNS AND COMPLIMENTS
(APRIL 2016-MAR 2017)
Director Children, Young People and Learning**

1 PURPOSE OF DECISION

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to present the Annual report of the Statutory Complaints function for Children Young People and Learning, for approval by the Executive Member for Children Young People and Learning. The report will then be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel for Children, Young People and Learning and the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **That the Executive Member approves the report.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Representations Procedure Regulations 2006 state that Complaints Services should produce an annual report for consideration.
- 3.2 The Complaints Service performs an important role in assuring the quality of response to children and young people or parents and carers who make complaints. The annual report supports the continuing development and review of the service and learning from complaints.
- 3.3 The Annual Report will be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel for Children, Young People and Learning and the Local Safeguarding Children Board following the approval of the Executive Member.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 None considered

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 The report provides an overview of the work of the Complaints Manager, which is a 0.4 FTE post, and identifies some of the key issues arising in terms of complaints during 2016/17. It also considers further developments to continually improve the way in which the Department responds to complaints in a positive manner. In addition to complaints, the report outlines compliments that have been received.
- 5.2 The Complaints Manager works closely with departments to ensure any complaints are resolved in a timely and satisfactory manner. In order to ensure positive outcomes, the Complaints Manager has held regular meetings with senior managers

in Children's Social Care, and provides training for new Social Workers on the complaints process. Findings from complaints are considered in the development of policies and procedures and in the ongoing learning culture across Children, Young People and Learning.

- 5.3 The Complaints Manager function is presently vacant and has experienced some staffing turbulence due to challenges recruiting a suitably skilled practitioner since the previous Complaints Manager left the post in September 2016 and insufficient hours to undertake the work. An administrator is presently in post providing additional support of up to 10 hours per week to ensure timely monitoring and tracking of statutory processes and data collation.
- 5.4 Following a review of the service to determine the level of capacity required to deliver an effective statutory function, budget proposals for 2018-19 will include increasing the Complaints Manager post to full time at a cost of £0.024m to ensure sufficient management oversight of all complaints with timely dissemination of learning across departments.
- 5.5 Overall, there were 47 complaints received during the period of 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 which is a marginal increase in the total statutory complaints from the previous year (45 in 2014/15). This year, nine complaints were deferred or declined, 38 were investigated. The rate of cases deferred or declined has decreased by 50% from the previous year.
- 5.5 The nature of the complaints that were upheld/partially upheld included the following:
- Communication
 - Overall quality of service
 - Assessment inaccuracies
- 5.6 The report notes that the number of complaints has not increased significantly and represents a small proportion of the total number of open cases within Children's Social Care (5%). However, the complexity of complaints as well as historical delays in resolving at Stage 1 has resulted in an increase in Stage 2 investigations (5) during 2016/17, including a Stage 3 Review panel held requiring 3 independent panel members alongside the Investigating Officer and Independent Person; impacting the annual budget from £5,000 to £20,000. There remains a cost pressure for the coming year given three ongoing Stage 2 investigations at the end of 2016/17. Given the increase in the number of open cases, it is likely that the number of complaints may in turn rise during 2017/18. Training and commissioning of in-house investigating officers is planned with a fixed schedule of costs to help minimise the impact of the potential cost increase during 2017/18.
- 5.7 During 2016/17 there has been a total of 2 complaints from children and young people, both involving the use of an Advocate with successful local resolution obtained. This is a reduction on the previous year, when 7 children complained with one escalation to Stage 2. Closer working with the Participation Officer is recommended to promote continued prompt resolution of complaint concerns raised by children and young people and inform continued improvements in service delivery.
- 5.8 There were 80 compliments recorded during the year which is a decrease on the previous year. Historically, a high proportion of compliments have come from professional feedback with a small amount directly from children and families in comparison. In an effort to create better balance and ensure effective use of

compliments from children and families, compliments from professionals will be redirected to line managers to support wider service delivery structures in relation to individual/team performance.

- 5.9 The recommendations within the annual report set out the focus for the coming year (2017/18) with a particular focus around improving the skill set and confidence across the service in resolving complaints in a timely manner. Additionally, the report recommends improved processes within the function to continually drive up standards for children and their families, achieving cost efficiencies where identified.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 S 26 of the Children Act 1989 requires the LA to provide a statutory complaints procedure with the additional duty of including an independent person at stage 2 and beyond. There is a similar duty to report annually on the work of the complaints manager during the proceeding year.

Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 The anticipated financial implications arising from this report are set out in the supporting information. Agreement or otherwise to increase the Complaints Manager post from 0.4 FTE to a full time post will be determined through the council's normal budget setting process.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 The Complaints Procedure is available to all those who meet the specified criteria for making a complaint using either the Statutory or the Local Authority Procedure.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 None identified in connection with the annual report. It should be noted that complex complaints are carefully managed with support from the Borough Solicitor where relevant to address and minimise risks with individual cases.

Other Officers

- 6.5 None identified

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 Children's Social Care Management

Method of Consultation

- 7.2 In writing

Representations Received

- 7.3 Not applicable

Contacts for further information

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Approved by Cllr Dr Gareth Barnard
Executive Member, Children, Young People
& Learning

Signature.....

Date: 9 November 2017

Approved by Nikki Edwards
Director, Children, Young People
& Learning

Signature.....

Date: 9 November 2017