
Meeting: Social Care, Health & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date: 1 August 2011
Subject: Customer Feedback – Complaints, Compliments Annual Report
Report of: Cllr Carole Hegley, Executive Member for Social Care, Health & Housing
Summary: This report fulfills the statutory duty to produce an annual report for Adult Social Care. The report provides statistics on the number of complaints received; complaint outcomes (upheld/not upheld); performance; issues complained about; and learning and improvements resulting from complaints for 2010/11.

Advising Officer: Julie Ogle - Director of Social Care, Health & Housing
Contact Officer: Sonya Branagan – Customer Relations Manager
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The annual report for noting links to the priorities

- Creating safer communities
- Supporting and caring for an ageing population

Financial:

Effective management of complaint issues focuses resource on resolution and reduces the risks of financial remedies being paid. The complaints procedure provides for conciliation meetings which are used as an effective alternative to local manager investigations. The annual report details local settlements where payments have been made.

Legal:

The production of an annual report is a statutory requirement and should be made available to anyone on request. The report will be posted on the council's web site.

Risk Management:

Complaints are assessed at the point of receipt to ensure risks are managed for example; safeguarding of vulnerable adults issues, risks to reputation. Effective complaints management ensures service failings are identified and remedied, thereby reducing the risk of public reports from the Local Government Ombudsman. There were no public reports about adult social care complaints.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

There are no staffing issues arising from the report

Equalities/Human Rights:

The report has been reviewed by the Corporate Policy Advisor (Equalities and Diversity) and the feedback taken into account in the final report. The report identified that improvements are to be made in the area of capture and monitoring of equalities and diversity data.

Community Safety:

To support vulnerable people to feel safe it is important that they know how to complain about services they receive; feel heard when they raise complaints; and that action is taken. The report evidences that service users have been able to complain, where complaints have been upheld failings are identified and improvements are put in place.

Sustainability:

There are no sustainability issues arising from the report

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That the Social Care, Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the content of the report.**

1. Introduction

- 1.1** The Council's Customer Relations Team, based in the Office of the Chief Executive, manages the council's customer feedback procedures. There are three procedures. Two of the procedures are statutory and are governed by Regulations, relating to Adult Social Care Services and Children's Services respectively. The third procedure covers all other council services.
- 1.2** The feedback procedures are the means by which customer compliments, comments and complaints are handled. Customer Relations provides a point of contact for customers wishing to complain via email, telephone or in writing. This provides confidence to those customers who may have lost faith in the services to respond to their issue.
- 1.3** The Council is required to monitor statutory complaints procedures and prepare an annual report. The Adult Social Care complaints report must be made available to any person on request.

2. Purpose of this report

2.1 This report provides an overview of the key issues in complaint handling for Adult Social Care for the period.

3. Adult Social Care customer feedback report

3.1 The Regulations require that the annual report should include:

The number of complaints received; the number that were well founded; the number referred to the Local Government Ombudsman; a summary of the subject matter of complaints received; matters of general importance arising or in the way complaints are handled; any matters where action is to be taken to improve services as a consequence of complaints.

3.2 The annual report addresses the requirements above and covers:

- The council's procedure for handling adult social care complaints.
- Equality and Diversity Monitoring.
- Summary Statistics including; number of complaints received; number referred to the Local Government Ombudsman; services most complained about; number well founded.
- Performance.
- Service improvements resulting from complaints.

3.3 To address the need to make the annual report available to anyone requesting it the report will be posted on the 'Feedback' pages of the council's website. The feedback pages contain information on how to provide compliments, comments and complaints

4. Complaints handling practice in 2010/11

4.1 The current approach to complaints requires each complaint to be assessed and a decision on the appropriate course of action. In addition all complaints made to the Council about commissioned services have to be considered under the Council's complaints procedure. This replaced the previous practice of sending all commissioned service complaints to the provider to respond to under their own procedure.

4.2 The Customer Relations Manager attended the Adult Social Care provider forums to brief providers on best practice in complaints and new powers of the Local Government Ombudsman to investigate self funded carers.

4.3 As well as the statutory annual report, weekly, monthly and quarterly reports on customer feedback have been provided based on the Director's requirements for performance reporting. This meant that senior managers had the opportunity to monitor customer feedback for their services. There was a focus on improving the capture of complaints during the period which resulted in 88 new complaints being recorded compared to 66 the previous year.

4.4 In the first half of the year action plans were not being put in place for complaints confirming; the method of handling; the timescale; or an offer to discuss the method of handling with the complainant. However, Customer Relations supported managers to better understand the need for action plans and in the second half of the year 84% of complaints were reported to have an action plan and 71% were completed in accordance with the plan.

5. Key themes from complaints

5.1 The main cause for complaint over the year was care management, including delays in assessments, communication and delays in delivering services. The Older People Service received the most complaints, 40 of the total 88 received. These complaints were about delays; customer care and poor communication; and handling of financial matters and the quality of services provided by external providers on behalf of social care.

5.2 Across the services there were complaints about the quality of services provided by care providers on behalf of the council i.e. day care and respite/residential. Complaints to the council were shared with the Adult Services Improvement Group and the Contracts Service. Whilst each individual complaint was actioned the Contracts Service ensured wider concerns about providers were monitored and managed to address contract and quality issues.

Appendices:

Annual Report 2010/11

Location of papers: Priory House, Chicksands