
Meeting: Social Care, Health & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date: 21 October 2013
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 monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure and produce an annual report for Adult Social Care complaints. The report provides statistics for 2012/13 on the number of complaints received including those considered by the Local Government Ombudsman; the number of complaints that were well founded (upheld fully or in part); a summary of the complaints subject matter; performance; and the actions taken to improve services as a consequence of complaints.

Advising Officer: Julie Ogley - 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

- Promoting health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable

Financial:

Effective management of complaint issues focuses resource on resolution and reduces the risks of financial remedies being paid. The learning from complaints is used to inform service improvements. The emphasis on local resolution and getting it right first time minimises the risk of cases requiring more costly formal investigations to achieve resolution.

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 includes limited analysis of equalities and diversity information due to the limitations of the capture and reporting system for complaints.

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 Improvement and Corporate Services Directorate 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 an alternative access for those customers who may have lost faith in the services to respond to their issue. The team can offer guidance to customer's and staff on the procedure and log all complaints for the service.
- 1.3 The Council is required to monitor the effectiveness of the 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 2012/13

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.

4.2 The percentage of complaints that were deemed to be well founded (upheld in full or in part) was 72% evidencing a receptiveness to customers' views and complaints.

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. The number of complaints received this year (61) was lower than last year (82). The number of compliments outnumbered complaints suggesting that whilst standards can sometimes drop there are also good examples of great customer care and service.

5. Key themes from complaints

5.1 The Older People's Service received the highest level of complaints, 40 of the 61 complaints. The main cause for complaint related to social work management of cases and dissatisfaction with the level or type of support provided or planned.

5.2 Included in the complaints for Older People's Services were a number of complaints about commissioned services, in particular home care services.

Complaints about the quality of services provided by care providers on behalf of 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:

Appendix A - Annual Report 2012/13

Location of papers: Priory House, Chicksands