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**Meeting:** Social Care, Health & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee

**Date:** 15 December 2014

**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 and Public Health complaints. The report provides statistics for 2013/14 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.

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**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. The procedures for Adult Social Care and for Public Health are statutory and are governed by Regulations.
- 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 customers and staff on the procedure. The team logs and tracks to closure all complaints for Adult Social Care.
- 1.3 The Council is required to monitor the effectiveness of the statutory complaints procedures and prepare an annual report. The Adult Social Care & Public Health 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 and Public Health for the period.

### **3. Adult Social Care & Public Health 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 and public health 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** With 68% of complaints deemed to be well founded in full or in part complaints were seen as a valuable source of information about customer experience and an opportunity to remedy mistakes. Managers took action to improve practices.

The activity for this reporting period shows that 'Local Resolution' has been an effective means of dealing with complaints, with 99% of complaints resolved through local resolution by managers of the service complained about. In Adult Social Care learning from customer experience through complaints has led to improvements to practices.

#### **4.3** As well as the statutory annual report, weekly, monthly and quarterly reports on adult social care 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 (85) was higher than last year (61). There were also 65 compliments with good examples of great customer care and service.

- 4.4 The Public Health Service delivers the majority of its services by commissioning from external providers who are expected to manage their own complaints. However, the Stop Smoking Service is delivered directly to residents by Central Bedfordshire Public Health staff. There were no formal complaints registered for the service. There were 2 compliments registered about the helpfulness of the stop smoking service. The annual review has highlighted that not all customer feedback has been formally recorded.

A plan has been put in place to improve the recording and handling of customer feedback for the Stop Smoking Service.

## **5. Key themes from complaints**

- 5.1 The Older People's Service received the highest level of complaints, 43 of the 85 complaints. Of these, 24 complaints related to social work management of cases, and the main causes of dissatisfaction were; the assessment process; decisions and advice regarding funding; assessment and support for carers; poor communication and customer care.
- 5.2 Included in the complaints for Older People's Services were 16 complaints about commissioned services, in particular home care services (10 cases). 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:**

Annual Report 2013/14

**Location of papers:** Priory House, Chicksands