

Central Bedfordshire Council

Social Care Health & Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

23 January 2017

Customer Feedback – Complaints, Compliments Annual Report

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Purpose of this report

1. This report provides an overview of the key issues in complaint handling and the effectiveness of the complaints procedure for Adults Social Care for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

1. To consider and comment on the content of the report.

Issues

Adults Social Care customer feedback report

2. The Local Authority Social Services & National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 require monitoring of the effectiveness of the complaints procedure. The annual report should include; the number of complaints received including those considered by the Local Government Ombudsman; the number of complaints well founded; a summary of the complaints subject matter; performance; and the actions taken to improve services as a consequence of complaints.
3. The annual report addressed the requirements above and covers:
 - a) The Council's procedure for handling adult social care and public health complaints.
 - b) Summary statistics including; number of complaints received; number referred to the Local Government Ombudsman; services most complained about; number well founded.
 - c) Performance.
 - d) Equality and Diversity Monitoring
 - e) Learning and service improvements resulting from complaints.

4. The Council is required to make the annual report available to anyone who requests it and one way this is done is through making it available on the 'Feedback' pages of the council's website. The feedback pages also contain information on how to provide compliments, comments and complaints.

Complaints handling practice in 2015/16

5. 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.
6. In Adult Social Care learning from customer experience through complaints has led to improvements to practices. With 73% 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. The activity shows that Local Resolution has been an effective means of dealing with complaints with the majority resolved through local managers of the service complained about.
7. 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 managed through the complaints procedure was lower this year (72) than last year (77). There were also 96 compliments with good examples of great customer care and service.
8. The Council's Public Health Service delivers the majority of its services through 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 8 compliments registered about the value of the stop smoking service and the helpfulness of staff.

Key themes from complaints

9. The main causes for complaints were related to poor customer care and communication. Service improvements were made as a consequence of complaints by both commissioned service providers and social care teams.
10. As part of their wider work to monitor commissioned services, the Contracts Team proactively seeks service user feedback on their

experience of the care provided. There are service user surveys both annually for residential care, and case by case for those receiving home care. In addition information from complaints is shared with the team who take appropriate steps to manage any wider contractual concerns. Where appropriate the Contracts Team worked with care providers to put in place action plans to improve.

11. The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) received one complaint about Adult Social Care in relation to charging for residential care placements. The LGO found fault and the Council agreed to write off any accrued debt contributions (£2786) in relation to care charges. The practice has changed and there are regular reviews of accounts and improved information for customers.
12. In the LGO's November 2016 report 'Review of Adult Social Care Complaints 2015/16' they highlighted a 25% increase in complaints about home care received. Complaints included care workers being late for or missing appointments, not staying long enough and not doing what they should – including not treating people with the dignity they deserve. 65% of the complaints the LGO investigated were upheld.
13. In comparison 8 of the complaints received by the Council in 2015/16 were in relation to the quality of home care provided to service users. Complaints included late calls/call timings, care plan not being followed, poor communications and incorrect billing. Three complaints were upheld in full in relation to call timings, care plan not being followed and poor communications. Two complaints were upheld in part in relation to call timings and poor communications. Providers have put in place action plans to improve services moving forward.

Council Priorities

14. The Council's priorities include providing great resident services, protecting the vulnerable, improving wellbeing and providing a more efficient and responsive Council. 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. The Council is expected to have an accessible complaints procedure including notifying complainants of their right to raise complaints with the Local Government Ombudsman. The Adult Social Care service welcomes complaints and has an open and transparent approach to resolution including engagement with the Local Government Ombudsman to agree appropriate and proportionate remedies.

Corporate Implications

15. 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.

Legal Implications

16. The Local Authority Social Services & National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 sets out the requirements in respect of monitoring complaints and the provision of an annual report.

Financial Implications

17. 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.

Equalities Implications

18. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation
19. 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 where appropriate. The report evidences that service users have been able to complain and that where complaints have been upheld failings are identified and improvements are put in place.
20. Due to the limitations of the capture and reporting system for complaints the report includes limited analysis of equalities and diversity information. However the indications are that very few complaints include concerns relating to discrimination.

Conclusion and next steps

21. The Committee is asked to consider and comment on the Customer Feedback – Complaints, Compliments Annual Report 1 April 2015- 31 March 2016.

Appendices

22. Appendix 1 – Annual Report ASCHH & Public Health 2015/16.

Background Papers

23. The following background papers, not previously available to the public, were taken into account and are available on the Council's website: None