

Meeting: Social Care Health & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date: 22 January 2018
Subject: **Customer Feedback – Complaints, Compliments Annual Report**
Report of: Julie Ogle, Director of Social Care Health and Housing
Summary: This report fulfills the statutory duty to produce an annual report for Adult Social Care and Public Health (Appendix A). The report provides statistics on the number of compliments and complaints received; complaint outcomes (upheld/not upheld); performance; issues complained about; and learning and improvements resulting from complaints for 2016/17.

Advising Officer:

Contact Officer: Paula Terry – 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

- Great Resident Services
- Protecting the Vulnerable; Improving Wellbeing
- A More Efficient and Responsive Council

Financial:

1. Effective management of complaint issues focuses resource on resolution and reduces the risks of financial remedies being paid. The complaints procedure provides for alternative dispute resolution which is used as an effective alternative to costly independent investigations

Legal:

2. 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:

3. Complaints are assessed at the point of receipt to ensure risks are managed for example; safeguarding, risks to reputation, exclusions. 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 of public health complaints.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

4. There are no staffing issues arising from the report

Equalities/Human Rights:

The report contains statistical analysis of monitoring information where information has been recorded.

Community Safety:

5. To support vulnerable people and families 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 put in place.

Sustainability:

There are no sustainability issues arising from the report

RECOMMENDATION:

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

Introduction

6. The Council's Customer Relations Team, based in the Social Care, Health and Housing 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.
7. 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.
8. The Council is required to monitor the effectiveness of statutory complaints procedures and prepare an annual report. The Adult Social Care and Public Health complaints report must be made available to any person on request.

Purpose of this report

9. This report provides an overview of the key issues in complaint handling and the effectiveness of the complaints procedure for Adult Social Care and Public Health for the period 2016/17.

Adult Social Care and Public Health Customer Feedback Report

10. 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.
11. 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.
12. 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.

Complaints handling practice in 2016/17

13. The current approach to complaints requires each complaint to be assessed and a decision made on the appropriate course of action. In addition, all complaints made to the Council about commissioned services must be considered under the Council's complaints procedure. In 2016/17, the number of complaints managed through the complaints procedure was lower (47) than last year (72). There were also 49 compliments received with good examples of great customer care and service.
14. Complaints were seen as important customer feedback and a means of identifying how practices may be changed for the better. Services were receptive to customers' views and complaints, with 85% of complaints either upheld fully or in part.
15. As well as the statutory annual report, weekly, monthly and quarterly reports on customer feedback have been provided to assist the Director's senior management team (SMT) to monitor customer feedback, performance and outcomes.
16. 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 21 compliments registered about the value of the stop smoking service and the helpfulness of staff.

Key themes from complaints

17. The main causes for complaints were related to poor customer care/communication and quality of care provision. Service improvements were made as a consequence of complaints by both commissioned service providers and social care teams.
18. 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.

The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) considered two complaints about Adult Social Care in relation to a carers direct payments and a safeguarding investigation. The LGO found fault in both cases but concluded that the first had been sufficiently remedied by the Council. In the second case the LGO recommended an apology and payment of £500 to acknowledge uncertainty and avoidable distress. Whilst benchmarking data is not available for all similar sized authorities the decision notices available on the LGO website indicate that in the same period financial remedies for Councils ranged up to £67,000.

Appendices:

Appendix A - Annual Report 2016/17.

Location of papers: Priory House, Chicksands