

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>RESILIENT COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
<b>Relevant Officer:</b>	Delyth Curtis, Director of People Karen Smith, Deputy Director of People (Adult Services)
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	1 September 2016

## **CUSTOMER RELATIONS TEAM ANNUAL REPORTS ON ADULT SERVICES AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES 2015/2016**

### **1.0 Purpose of the report:**

- 1.1 To review the Annual Customer Relations Reports relating to Adult Services and Children's Services.

The reports attached as appendices include details of complaints, comments and compliments received during 2015/16, as well as Member of Parliament and Councillor enquiries, Local Government Ombudsman contacts, and Freedom of Information Requests.

### **2.0 Recommendation(s):**

- 2.1 To scrutinise the content of the Annual Reports.

### **3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):**

- 3.1 It is a requirement for local authorities to make publically available details of social care complaints received each year.

- 3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

- 3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

- 3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

None.

#### 4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council Priority is 'Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience'.

#### 5.0 Background Information

5.1 Included as appendices to this report are the annual Customer Relations reports for 2015/2016 relating to Adult Services and Children's Services. These documents contain details of complaints, comments and compliments received during 2015/2016, as well as Member of Parliament and Councillor enquiries, Local Government Ombudsman contacts, and Freedom of Information Requests.

5.2 The number of contacts dealt with during the course of 2015/2016 by each Department, together with comparatives from the previous year, can be summarised as follows:

	Adult Services		Children's Services	
	2015/16	2014/15	2015/16	2014/15
Complaints	80	91	91	125
- of which upheld	19	19	6	9
- of which partially upheld	28	26	25	19
- responded within timescales	48%	53%	68%	65%
Compliments	556	367	58	39
Comments	12	24	9	13
MP enquiries	42	52	44	57
Councillor enquiries	17	14	15	8

5.3 For Adult Services, the number of complaints has fallen since the previous year, although there were a similar number of those which were upheld or partially upheld, and the level of responses within timescales has decreased slightly. The number of compliments has again increased, with a total of 556 recorded; a number of these were collected from positive feedback from surveys and training evaluation forms.

5.4 For Children's Services, the number of complaints has decreased significantly to 91 in the year, although the number of those upheld either in whole or partially has increased slightly. Response times to complaints have improved again to 68%.

5.5 The main themes of complaints across both Departments continue to be "quality of service" and "staff attitude/treatment of customer". There have been continued

efforts to strengthen the lessons learnt processes in order to avoid repeated complaints about the same issues. Timescales for responding to complaints are set at the outset depending on the complexity of the subject matter, with a focus on setting realistic response times in order that expectations can be met.

5.6 Learning from lessons is given high importance in both Departments. A large sample of lessons learnt can be found in the appendices to both of the annual reports. A selection of these are reproduced below, which demonstrate how some of the themes with high incidence of complaints are dealt with:

- The Social Worker was able to reflect on the case and agreed with the outcome of the investigation. Communication skills will be discussed in supervision. A Reflective Practice session regarding the outcome of complaint will be arranged.
- Information given at the initial assessment did not provide adequate information regarding the process of direct payment. All staff should take with them a range of information on an initial visit including Fact Sheets regarding financial implications and direct payments to leave with the service user. All staff will be informed of this decision at team meetings and they will need to demonstrate this has been done by recording on the assessment or in a case note they have given appropriate written information.
- Provider Manager has given reassurances that timing of visits will be adhered to, consistency will be improved and the importance of reading the care plan and completing the required tasks has been reiterated to the staff. In addition, one member of staff, has taken over the co-ordination of service user's care and she will be monitoring it closely.
- The agency has followed appropriate procedures regarding the two staff members concerned and have put steps in place to re-educate and train them in relation to patient confidentiality.
- Addressing of confidential information being sent out via the postal system. Lesson Learnt: All relevant administration staff spoken and relevant Managers reminded of confidentiality requirements and the need to provide full courtesy titles, names/initials with contact address details. Formal instructions implemented for addressing mail correctly.
- Contacts made to Social Worker with no response received. Lessons Learnt: Respond to calls and contacts each day wherever possible or as soon as practicable. Message taking to improve to allow Social Workers to be aware of all daily contacts.

- Case management and communication. Lessons Learnt: Staff have been spoken to and practice across the relevant teams has been improved after training delivered to whole areas of teams. Emphasis on communication and quality of service.
- Young people making complaints. Lessons Learnt: ensure timescales are met. All young people's matters to take priority and moved forward as swiftly as possible.

- 5.7 Last year, the Scrutiny Committee enquired whether something similar to the NHS's Friends and Families Test could be used in respect of services accessed by Council service users. After further exploration, it transpires that the ability to rate and comment on residential homes and care at home providers is already available through the NHS Choices website. Members of the public can search CQC registered providers in a given area, see ratings given by other people, and leave their own comments. The questions asked are: "Recommend to Friends and Family?", "Your review", and "When did you visit this care provider". The results are shown by way of an overall user rating out of 5 stars. The care homes information also indicates which providers have a registered manager in post, levels of staff turnover, food hygiene rating, and size of the home. For homecare, shared lives and supported living, the public can see whether the provider is accepting new clients alongside the star rating.
- 5.8 In order to increase the number of reviews being recorded for social care services, changes have been made so that all care plans now incorporate text to point people to the NHS Choices website. A page has also been added to Blackpool4me to do the same. Posted reviews will be looked at in advance of each contract review undertaken and discussed with providers.
- 5.9 A further focus over the last year has been a closer examination of how feedback from children and young people is handled. Feedback forms on the Council's website are reproduced in more straightforward styles for adolescents and also for the younger child. The significant majority of complaints are received into the team via e-mail or the online form, either directly from complainants or by referral from social care staff.
- 5.10 As well as publicly available information on how to complain, children are given feedback forms in the pack they receive when they first become looked after, and social care staff signpost people to the Customer Relations Team if they wish to give feedback. Anyone under the age of 18 who makes a complaint is asked if they want to access a Children's Advocate to help them to put their views across. Furthermore, the Looked After Children Engagement Officer actively supports and encourages young people to feed their concerns through to the Council, by any

means that they feel comfortable with, whether this is by e-mail, using the standard forms, or by phone.

5.11 Regular reports are now taken to the Corporate Parent Panel, which detail the complaints and compliments received relating to Children's Social Care, with a focus on complaints from young people, how these have been handled, and lessons that have been learned.

5.12 In order to further improve the customer experience, the Departments have committed to the following next steps:

- Continue to identify lessons to be learnt from complaints by sharing good practice across services, and by using governance structures to monitor that actions have been taken.
- Further improve the setting of realistic expectations of timescales for responding to complaints in order that complainants receive our response when we tell them they will.
- Heads of Service are continuing to review trends in complaints, recognising and implementing lessons learnt as and when necessary in order to reduce similar complaints.

5.13 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

5.14 **List of Appendices:**

Appendix 9(a) Customer Relations Feedback Report 2015/2016 – Adult Services  
Appendix 9(b) Customer Relations Feedback Report 2015/2016 – Children's Services

**6.0 Legal considerations:**

6.1 Local authorities are required to make publically available an annual report containing details of complaints received relating to social care.

**7.0 Human Resources considerations:**

7.1 None.

**8.0 Equalities considerations:**

8.1 None.

**9.0 Financial considerations:**

9.1 None.

**10.0 Risk management considerations:**

10.1 None.

**11.0 Ethical considerations:**

11.1 None.

**12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:**

12.1 The reports have been considered at the Adult Services Governance Committee and the Children's Services Senior Management Teams, and discussed with the Cabinet Secretary and relevant Cabinet Members.

**13.0 Background papers:**

13.1 None.