

Minutes of the Safeguarding Overview & Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 3 August 2021

Present: Richard Ford (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair)

Attendance

Janet Eagland
Peter Kruskonjic
Gillian Pardesi

Kath Perry, MBE
Mike Wilcox

Also in attendance: Julia Jessel and Mark Sutton

Apologies: Gill Burnett, Jason Jones, Bob Spencer and Jill Waring

PART ONE

21. Declarations of Interest

There were none at this meeting.

22. Minutes of the Safeguarding Overview & Scrutiny meeting held on 6 July 2021

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6 July 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Vice Chairman (in the Chair).

23. Customer Feedback and Complaints Service - Adult's Social Services Annual Report 2020-21

The Council has a duty to publish a report annually on the activity of the Statutory Complaints and Representation Service. Members now considered the Adults Social Care Annual Report 2020/21, detailing the nature of complaints and the Council's response to these during the period April 2020 to March 2021.

Members heard from the Cabinet Member for Health and Care and from the Complaints Manager. The complaints process was shared with them and the main reasons for complaints were highlighted, these being: financial assessment and/or contribution; poor communication; case management; charges not being discussed; and delay in receiving services.

The Committee noted that, following a request last year, the Annual Reports had been prepared for earlier scrutiny this year and the Vice-Chairman thanked the Complaints Manager for this. The Committee scrutinised detail of the report, including;

- staffing issues, whether there were enough social services staff and if their individual caseloads were manageable;

- the complexity of information shared around financial contributions, the stress this could cause for families and service users, and whether social care should be free at the point of access, as health care;
- responding to complaints adding to the workload of staff, as this was extra to their “day job”;
- benchmarking against other local authorities around the number and type of complaint as well as responses and the work of the Complaints Teams, including the timeliness of processes;
- the role of the Ombudsman;
- the importance of effective communication; and,
- whether calls should be recorded.

Members were pleased to note the compliments received and were aware that, as many of the front-line services for Adults Social Care now sat with the Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust (MPFT), most of the compliments were made to them.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Care informed the Committee that she intended to consider the detail shared with service users and their families around financial contribution and charges, to ensure the information given was in the simplest form and easily understandable.

The Committee were pleased to note that organisational learning from complaints continued to be a key part of this process. They also asked for percentage increase and/or decrease figures for compliments made during this period when compared to figures in the previous Annual Report.

RESOLVED:

That,

- a) the Annual Report of the Customer Feedback and Complaints Service, Adults Social Services 2020/21 be endorsed;
- b) the Complaints Manager be congratulated on the earlier production of the report and on its detail and quality; and
- c) percentage comparison figures be given for the number of compliments received in this Annual Report compared to the report of 2019/20.

24. Customer Feedback and Complaints Service - Children's Social Services Annual Report 2020-21

In line with the Children Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 the Local Authority is required to produce an annual report giving details of the number and type of complaints, including the outcomes and timescales involved. The Committee now considered the Children’s Services Annual Report 2020/21 from the Customer Complaints and Feedback Service. This included both statutory complaints and those considered under the Corporate Complaints Procedure.

Members heard from the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and from the Complaints Manager, noting in particular that complaints were down this year and that

there had been a 17% increase in the number of compliments received. However, whilst the effects of Covid were not seen in this report there may be an impact on the reporting next year.

The Committee scrutinised the Annual Report, noting the excellent way in which learning from complaints was shared across the Service. They also noted the improvements in the complaint figures relating to SEND. They shared concerns around Ombudsman delays, understanding that this was largely due to the backlog sustained after an eight-week closure during the first lockdown, but being aware that there will be an impact for complainants from the delays this has caused.

Members considered the detail of the report, including raising queries around:

- the disparity in the number of complaints made by adults as opposed to children and the reasons for this;
- recognising the hard work within SEND and commending the reduction in complaints within this service area;
- recognising the emotive nature of complaints and concerns around the three stage process and whether this increased rather than decreased the emotive nature of any situation;
- the unintended positive impact of Complaint Panels using Teams, with complainants generally more relaxed and open throughout the process, and whether DfE guidance will allow this to continue post Covid restrictions;
- complaints around children and young people with disabilities and the need to work effectively with health colleagues to ensure appropriate services are received; and,
- the safety of the child always being paramount, with Heads of Service working closely post the complaint process to give reassurances for continued service provision.

The Committee congratulated the Cabinet Member and Complaints Manager on an excellent report and on the nature of the compliments received.

RESOLVED: That;

- a) the Annual Report of the Customer Feedback and Complaints Service, Children's Social Services 2020/21 be endorsed;
- b) the Complaint Manager and her Team be congratulated on the quality and timeliness of the report and on the reduction in complaints and increase in compliments.

25. Work Programme

The Committee considered their work programme, noting that the Vice Chairman for Scrutiny and the Vice- Chairman for Overview would be meeting with Members individually to consider the most appropriate approach to conducting the items they proposed.

The suggestion was made for a six monthly update on complaints to review the impact Covid has had rather than waiting for the Annual report. The Vice Chairman agreed to raise this with the Chairman and cabinet Members during the Triangulation planning meeting.

RESOLVED: That the work programme be noted.

Chairman