

Title of Report:	Children's Social Care Complaints Report
Report to be considered by:	Executive
Date of Meeting:	31 March 2011
Forward Plan Ref:	EX2224

Purpose of Report: To report on the statutory complaints process for the year 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010.

Recommended Action: To receive the report and agree its recommendations in preparation for its public presentation.

Reason for decision to be taken: Local authorities must each financial year publish an annual report in order to keep the local authority informed about the operation of its complaints procedure. The report should be 'presented to staff, the relevant local authority committee, and to the regulator and general public.'

Other options considered: None

Key background documentation:

- 'Getting the Best from Complaints' DCFS - Social Care Complaints and Representations for Children, Young People and Others.
- Statutory guidance to accompany The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 (Statutory Instrument 2006/1738)

The proposals will also help achieve the following Council Plan Themes:

- CPT10 - Promoting Independence**
- CPT11 - Protecting Vulnerable People**
- CPT12 - Including Everyone**
- CPT13 - Value for Money**
- CPT14 - Effective People**
- CPT15 - Putting Customers First**
- CPT16 - Excellent Performance Management**

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Council Plan Priorities and Themes by:

Shaping future service delivery to meet the needs of the vulnerable people served.

Portfolio Member Details	
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Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	10 th March 2011

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Implications

Policy:	The Children & Young People social Care Representations and Complaints policy is compliant with the requirements of the relevant legislation
Financial:	Non specific to this report
Personnel:	Non specific to this report
Legal/Procurement:	This report ensures the Council meets its legal duty to report and publish an Annual Report
Property:	Non specific to this report
Risk Management:	Non specific to this report
Equalities Impact Assessment:	Stage 1 Completed

Is this item subject to call-in?	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:		
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval		<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council		<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position		<input type="checkbox"/>
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months		<input type="checkbox"/>
Item is Urgent Key Decision		<input type="checkbox"/>

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Local Authorities are required to have a specific complaints process for children's social care matters and should monitor the operation and effectiveness of their procedure as well as how information about complaints is being used to improve services and delivery.
- 1.2 The presentation of the report for 2009/10 has been delayed this year, due to the significant increase in Access to Records requests received during 2010 from people formerly looked after by the Council and its predecessor. These requests involve huge amounts of record retrieval and copying, third party agreement, are managed by the same part-time member of staff who deals with complaints, and have statutory timescales which must be adhered to. Priority has been given to dealing with this work and complaints, and the production of this report has therefore been delayed as a result.

2. Proposals

- 2.1 The report highlights a number of areas where the service has worked well in responding to complaints and on the whole has met most of the requirements under the legislation and guidance. For example 96.4% of complaints were acknowledged within 3 days, 69% were dealt with then within 10 days and of the others there were acceptable reasons for responding later than the 10days. This compares favourably with national practice and maintains last year's significant improvement on previous figures of 60% within timescale.
- 2.2 The numbers of complaints at stage 1 have dropped from 86 to 48, stage 2 numbers have stayed static at one, and this year there were no stage 3 complaints, as was the case last year. Complaints from children have dropped from 14 last year to 9 this year. The drop in numbers overall, and by children in general is due to the increased efficacy of dealing with issues as they arise.
- 2.3 As well as complaints the service received over 100 compliments and these are acknowledged also in the reports appendix.

3. Learning from complaints

- 3.1 Outcomes and findings from complaints provide an essential learning tool and service managers are provided with regular feedback as to the issues emerging. Examples of specific learning and associated change in actions are provided in page 13/14 of the report.
- 3.2 A number of new public information handouts have been produced to underpin information given verbally by workers to families, to support good communication.

4. Recommendations and Areas for Development from the Annual Report

The Complaints and Public Information Manager has made a number of recommendations and suggested areas for development which have been embraced by the service as follows:

- 2009 – 2010 will see further training for staff to continue to raise awareness, as well as briefing sessions at Team Meetings..
- Surveying of people using the process is taking place later in 2011.
- Work will continue to increase uptake of the process by children and young people.
- The information set of handouts for families, which are cheaply and quickly produced, will continue to develop in response to identified need.

Appendices

Appendix A - Learning From Complaints - Annual Report for 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010

Appendix B – Compliments – 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010

Consultees

Local Stakeholders: NCH Action for Children (Advocacy service for young people)

Officers Consulted: Managers of the C & YP Social Care Service, Corporate Board

Trade Union: N/A