
Children's Services Scrutiny Committee – Wednesday 9th September 2020

Report of the Acting Director of Children's Services

Children's Services Complaints: Response Times Action Plan

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to provide details of the actions taken and processes put in place to improve complaint response times within Children's Services.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that:-
 - Members note and approve the revised processes and actions put in place to improve complaint response times.

Background

3. The annual report providing information relating to all statutory and corporate complaints for the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 showed poor performance in relation to how long it takes officers to respond to complaints raised.
4. Members requested that the Interim Director of Children's Services devise an Action Plan regarding the concerns raised by Members in relation to the poor response times highlighted in the annual report.
5. Extensive discussions with Senior Managers have taken place and the following key changes have been introduced in an attempt to improve performance / monitor the reasons for delays:
 - Managers are now made aware from the referral of the complaint that they will be required to provide an explanation as to the reason for any delayed responses.

- An additional earlier reminder has been introduced to the process.
- Service Managers, Heads of Service and ultimately the Acting Director of Childrens Services will be fully aware of and involved in responses that are approaching or have exceeded the response due date.
- Heads of Service will include complaints as a standing item on their team meetings and review progress on outstanding cases.
- Amendments to ICT systems have been made in order that the reasons for any late responses can be captured and reported on. A number of options are available to record this data in order that specific reasons can be identified including other urgent work pressures that are impacting on an officer's ability to respond on time.
- Senior Managers will be expected to ensure that managers provide a reason for any delays that occur.
- Managers have been reminded that individual training is available to them from the Complaints Team if they require this in relation to the complaints process / responses.

6. The above measures have recently been fully introduced. However, it is too early to ascertain if the above measures have had any impact on responses times. This will be reported to a future meeting.

Finance

7. There are no direct financial implications arising from the contents of this report.

Law

8. The procedures for Children's complaints, are determined by legislation, predominantly involving the: -

- Children Act 1989, Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.
- The Children and Adoption Act 2002 and Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

9. However, some complaints fall outside of the statutory process. This is where the complainant does not meet the requirements to be considered under the statutory process. In these cases, the complaint is dealt with under the corporate complaint process. All complaints received are included in this report.

Equality Impact

10. This report has no direct implications for the Council's commitment to equality and diversity. The complaints policy is applied fairly and equitably to all users.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

11. There are no organisational service transformation implications that require consideration.

Commercial/Procurement

12. There are no commercial or procurement implications that require consideration.

Health and Wellbeing and Safety

13. There are no health, wellbeing or safety implications that require consideration.



Helen Ellis
Acting Director of Children's Services

Contact Officers: Darren Nicklin/Tracey Curran: Complaints Manager / Senior
Complaints Officer - People
Telephone: 01384 816798 / 812417
Email: Darren.nicklin@dudley.gov.uk tracey.curran@dudley.gov.uk

Appendices

Revised Process to Monitor / Progress Chase Complaint Responses



REVISED CHASING
PROCESS FINAL JULY