

Select Committee on Children's Services – 23 January 2008

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Complaints Comments and Compliments, Children's Social Care Services Annual Report

Purpose of Report

1. To provide members with information about the performance of the Children's Services Directorate in receiving, monitoring and responding to social care compliments and complaints.
2. To meet the statutory requirements to report on the workings of the Representations and Complaints procedures (Children Act 1989).
3. To ensure that members are informed of the performance in delivering the service, to assist in continually improving standards.

Background

4. There is a statutory responsibility placed upon Local Authorities to produce an Annual Report to elected members on the workings of the Social Services complaints and representations procedures (Children Act 1988 and, for adults, NHS and Community Care Act 1990).
5. The work undertaken by Social Care agencies is complex and sometimes involves difficult decisions being made about people's liberty or whether a family should stay together. It is vital therefore that Service User's should be able to comment formally on their experiences of using these services. Examples of the work undertaken by this Local Authority over the past year are:
 - 3,205 children were the subject of referrals to the Directorate
 - 1,453 children were the subject of an Initial Assessment
 - 410 children were the subject of a more complex Core Assessment
 - 625 children in total were looked after as a result of sometimes traumatic family experience.

6. The Annual Report for the period April 2006 – March 2007 is attached. It contains more detailed information about compliments and complaints received initially by Dudley Social Services and later Dudley Children's Services following the establishment of this new Directorate. A vital function of the report is to enable the Directorate to learn from compliments and complaints and section 8 of the report give examples from the past year of actions that have been taken in response.
7. Key issues contained in the report are:
 - The increase from the previous year for the number of complaints received has been maintained
 - No complainants chose to proceed with their complaint past Stage 1
 - The majority of all complaints are responded to within timescale
 - Training has been offered on a regular basis to all staff and has been tailored to suit their needs according to their responsibility within the complaints process.

Proposals

8. That members note and comment on the information contained in the Annual Report 2006- 2007.
9. That members agree that the report be made publicly available as required by legislation and guidance.

Resource Implications

10. Quality and Complaints has five members of staff dealing with complaints; two members (one full time and one part time) concentrate on complaints from children and their families.

Finance

11. There are no extra financial demands placed upon the Directorate from this report. Extra costs are incurred through complaints activity by the occasional funding Stage 2 investigations and Review Panels; however, senior management have taken account of this following consultation with Quality and Complaints.

Law

12. Local Authorities have a statutory requirement to appoint a Designated Complaints Manager, have procedures for managing Comments and Complaints and to produce an annual report on the workings of the Representations and Complaints procedures (Children Act) 1989.

Equality Impact

13. All Service users who believe that they have a complaint are entitled to use the service. The information obtained from complaints activity assists in the development of genuinely diverse services and to correct any imbalance that may be identified.
14. The Quality and Complaints team continues to work locally with both formal and informal organisations to improve links between disadvantaged sectors of the community and the Directorate.

Recommendation

15. It is recommended that:-
 - members comment as appropriate on the attached Annual Report
 - members should, subject to any amendments, approve this report
 - subject to the Annual Report being accepted by the Select Committee that this report is made available as a public document.



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