

Annual Complaints Report - Solihull Children's Social Care Services

1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018

Executive Summary

- 2017/18 saw a decrease of 1 complaint to Solihull Children's Services compared to the previous year. 59 new complaints were received, compared to 60 in 2016/17. This was despite an increase in service users for Children's Social Care Services from 3663 in 2016/17 to 3859 in 2017/18.
- Children's Social Work complaints continue to be accurately split between Statutory, (complaints raised by or on behalf of children) and Corporate complaints (complaints raised by adults relating to any service provided directly to them). There were 21 new Statutory complaints and 38 new Corporate complaints during 2017-18, with some service users making complaints spanning both the Corporate and Statutory processes.
- This system of analysing Children's Social Work Services complaints was endorsed in the Local Government Ombudsman publication, "*Are we getting the best from children's social care complaints?*" published in March 2015.
- The Council's webpage provides up to date information to service users about making complaints about its' Children's Services at <http://www.solihull.gov.uk/About-the-Council/Complaints/childrenscomplaints> and information for children in and on the edge of care is provided on the Children in Care webpage at <https://getitsorted.me/2017/11/30/complaints/>
- 61.5% of Statutory complaints were resolved within the 20 working day timescale which is a decrease compared to 2016/17; however the quality of responses and the fact that there were no LGO complaint investigations for Children's Social Work Services in 2017/18, does need to be considered alongside this.
- Providing such quality responses does take time and if the response resolves the complaint at a local level, then this can only be positive for both the complainant and the Council.
- Since October 2013, only 4 new Statutory complaints have progressed to a Stage 2 (independent investigation), the last one being in March 2015. This is due to both the accurate splitting of complaints between the Statutory and Corporate procedures and the detail provided in Stage 1 complaint responses.

- 91% of Corporate complaints were resolved within the extended 30 working day timescale. This is an increase when compared with 86% in 2016/17. The numbers of complaint progressing to Stage 2 have also decreased (16% compared to 19% in 2016/17).
- Talking to complainants ensures that where it is appropriate and possible, that concerns are resolved, without the need to progress to the formal complaints process. This can prove to be a productive and quicker means of resolution for all concerned. The Performance & Complaints Team have, in 2017/18, handled 52 such cases for Children's Social Work Services) and 5 for the SEND 0-25 Service.
- During 2016/17 there were 19 new complaints for the StART Team which is an increase compared to 11 in 2016/17. Learning forms are completed for all complaints which should identify any issues and improvements that need to be put in place. Only one SEND complaint proceeded to LGO investigation in 2017/18.
- During 2017/18, the Performance & Complaints Team has continued to send learning forms to investigating managers for each complaint responded to and then liaise with those managers through to implementation of the learning highlighted. 84% (54 out of 64) of the learning forms sent to managers during 2016/17 have been completed and returned and learning outcomes have been categorised. Information is now being collated regarding the impact that this learning has had in practice.
- Any outstanding learning forms will be chased up by the Performance & Complaints Team to ensure they are returned and learning is implemented.
- Compliments have increased substantially from 63 in 2016/17 to 91 in 2017/18. These also provide an opportunity for learning from good practice. There have been some really positive service user compliments this year.
- The Complaints Team have also received some really positive compliments from complainants.
- In 2017/18, the Ombudsman found fault in only one case (SEND) and the findings were taken on board and learning implemented in this service.
- The annual letter from the Ombudsman for 2017/18 shows that the numbers of LGSCO investigations for Solihull Council overall are low compared with our statistical neighbours as is our uphold rate.
- Detailed complaints reports for heads of service and the Directorate Leadership Team are produced on time and at regular intervals (both monthly and quarterly). These highlight areas needing attention and are an integral part of the complaints service provided by the Performance and Complaints Team. Complaints data is also reported to CLT.

Looking ahead to 2018-19

- During 2018/19, the Performance and Complaints Team will complete a review of the Council's procedure for dealing with Statutory Complaints relating to Children's Social Work Services, in order to ensure that current senior members of staff have the opportunity to feed into and shape this.