

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
3 NOVEMBER 2008**

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS
ANNUAL REPORT 2007/2008**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To submit to Members the annual report on the operation and effectiveness of the policy and procedure, 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008.

Summary

2. Attached at **Appendix 1** is the annual report on the operation and effectiveness of the Children's Services comments, compliments and complaints procedure for the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008. The report details the total feedback to Children's Services.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that Members note, consider and comment upon this report.

**Murray Rose
Director of Children's Services**

Background Papers

The Children Act 1989
Children Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.

Julie Bee : Extension 2979

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no implications with regard to S17 Crime & Disorder
Health and Well Being	This report is not requesting a key decision, however, the nature of clients accessing Children's Services Compliments, Comments, Suggestions and Complaints and the resulting decisions and actions may impact on the health and well being of the children and young people of the Borough.
Sustainability	There are no implications with regards to the environmental impact
Diversity	This report is not requesting a key decision, however, the nature of certain clients accessing Children's Services Compliments, Comments, Suggestions and Complaints may impact on their ability to do so.
Wards Affected	No particular wards are affected by this report.
Groups Affected	No particular groups are affected by this report, however, Children's Services recognises the complex needs and delivery issues and the often daily changing circumstances of children

	and young people, and this is reflected within the policy and procedures.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the Council's budget or policy framework
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not a key decision
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	No specific themes of the Sustainable Community Strategy are the subject of this report

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

4. The current legislation in the form of the Children Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 which came into force from 1 September 2006.
5. A procedure for managing Children's Services compliments, comments, suggestions and complaints has been developed to reflect the following key areas in the complaints procedure for adults:
 - (a) Clarification of the roles of the designated Complaints Manager.
 - (b) A 12 month time limit on making complaints.
 - (c) Requirement for local authorities to appoint a Complaints Manager independent of operational line management.
 - (d) Shorter timescales for resolving complaints at Stage 1 (Informal Resolution) - ten working days plus another ten working days if the complainant agrees.
 - (e) Stage 2 timescales (Investigation) are now 25 working days with the extension to 65 working days in total if the complainant agrees.
 - (f) Review Panels (Stage 3) to be retained with local authorities but with more precise and focussed brief on constituting and running them.
 - (g) Clear advice on the format of investigating reports and process/elements to consider in investigating complaints.
6. A programme of training and development for staff has been undertaken with a series of half-day training sessions held for managers appointed as 'Investigating Officers' investigating complaints at stage 2 and briefings for front line staff at team meetings. Additional training is being programmed in via the Workforce Development Team on an annual basis as a refresher for staff.
7. Children's Services has amended and continued to publicise its procedure for dealing with compliments, comments, suggestions and complaints. Leaflets '*Tell us what you think*' (to be renamed '*Something to Say?*') are routinely passed to service users and their carers when they enter the social care system.
8. Complaints information can be made available on tape, in Braille, large print and in other languages on request.
9. The procedures also include details of monitoring arrangement and information to be included within the annual report. Performance is monitored and analysed and includes analysis on performance on complaints and particularly the compliance with timescales for investigation. This forms a small but significant part of the local and national drive to

improve performance and responsiveness in the delivery of services.

10. Attached at **Appendix 1** is the Annual Report on Comments, Compliments and Complaints for the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008.
11. Total feedback to Children's Services was 36 in 2007/08.
12. Compliments represent 25 of all feedback (8 out of 36).
13. Children's Services has continued to deal with complaints at stage 1 of the procedure, which allows for problems to be resolved at a local level with the managers and staff responsible for the service. 89% (15 out of 17) were resolved at Stage 1.
14. No complaints progressed to stage 2 or stage 3 during the time year.
15. There were no reports against Children's Services from the Local Government Ombudsman with regard to children's social care complaints during the year.
16. It is also pleasing that staff and managers have clearly focused their energies positively on the resolution of complaints.
17. The monitoring of actions is currently been reviewed with an action monitoring form produced to enable investigating officers to detail any actions/recommendations required from outcomes. The form details the timescale and officer responsible for implementation of the actions together with any lessons learnt and/or change in procedures resulting for the action. This will then be monitored via service meetings and feed into Children's Services performance management reports.

Conclusion

18. Children's Services operates to meet the often complex personal support needs of the children and young people of Darlington.
19. In commissioning and providing services Children's Services aims to avoid the necessity for complaints, but at the same time recognises that having regard to the complex needs and delivery issues and the often daily changing circumstances of people, individuals may be dissatisfied. It is in these circumstances that we need to ensure that the public, in particular children and young people, knows how to complain, have confidence in any investigative process and particularly know that we will work hard to resolve any issues of dissatisfaction.

Outcome of Consultation

20. No consultation was carried out in preparation of this report.