

CABINET
5 SEPTEMBER 2023

COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMMENTS ANNUAL REPORTS 2022/23

Responsible Cabinet Members

Councillor Stephen Harker, Leader
Councillor Libby McCollom, Local Services Portfolio
Councillor Nick Wallis, Children and Young People Portfolio
Councillor Chris McEwan, Economy Portfolio
Councillor Matthew Roche, Health and Housing Portfolio
Councillor Mandy Porter, Resources Portfolio
Councillor Anne Marie Curry, Adults Portfolio
Councillor Dr Amanda Riley, Stronger Communities Portfolio

Responsible Directors

Ian Williams, Chief Executive
Elizabeth Davison, Group Director of Operations
James Stroyan, Group Director of People
Dave Winstanley, Group Director of Services

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Cabinet with the 2022/23 Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports for:
 - (a) Adult Social Care (**Appendix 2**);
 - (b) Children's Social Care (**Appendix 3**);
 - (c) Corporate (**Appendix 4**);
 - (d) Housing (**Appendix 5**); and
 - (e) Public Health (**Appendix 6**).

Summary

2. It is important that the Council's complaints, compliments and comments procedures are accessible so people can tell us what they think about the services we provide. The Council constantly strives to ensure an organisational culture in which complaints are accepted, owned and resolved as quickly as possible and one in which learning from complaints is used to improve services.
3. The Council received a total of 709 complaints during 2022/23, a decrease from 739 complaints in 2021/22, although an increase from 629 in 2020/21. While complaint

numbers have risen post-pandemic, they remain lower than pre-pandemic levels, with the Council receiving 838 complaints in 2019/20.

4. The Council received a total of 202 compliments during 2022/23, a decrease from 217 in 2021/22, 309 in 2020/21 and 292 in 2019/20.
5. The Council received a total of 112 comments during 2022/23, a decrease from 127 in 2021/22, 178 in 2020/21 and 168 in 2019/20.
6. A summary table is provided at **Appendix 1**.
7. The production of an annual report in respect of representations received under the Adult Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure is a requirement of the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009.
8. The production of an annual report in respect of representations received under the Children's Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure is a requirement of the Children Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.
9. The production of an annual report in respect of representations received under the Public Health Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure is a requirement of the NHS Bodies and Local Authorities (Partnership Arrangements, Care Trusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch) Regulations 2012.

Recommendation

10. It is recommended that:-

- (a) That Cabinet notes the content of the attached reports.
- (b) That Cabinet endorses the further recommendations made in the Corporate, Children's and Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports.

Reasons

11. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:-

- (a) To make Cabinet aware of the number and nature of the complaints, compliments and comments received by the Council and the resulting organisational learning.
- (b) To ensure the Council is:
 - (i) Complying with the Children Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006;
 - (ii) Complying with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code;

- (iii) Complying with the Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure;
- (iv) Complying with the Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure; and
- (v) To improve satisfaction with complaints handling.

Elizabeth Davison
Group Director of Operations

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Lee Downey : Extension 5451

S17 Crime and Disorder	There is no specific impact on Crime and Disorder.
Health and Wellbeing	The purpose of the Adult Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Report is to improve the service we provide to service users and their carers.
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	There are no specific recommendations contained within the attached reports concerning Carbon Reduction.
Diversity	Complaint investigations have led to service improvements for people with protected characteristics.
Wards Affected	All.
Groups Affected	All.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not have a direct impact on the Budget and Policy Framework.
Key Decision	This report does not constitute a Key Decision.
Urgent Decision	This report does not require an Urgent Decision.
Council Plan	Learning from complaints contributes towards the delivery of the priorities in the Plan.
Efficiency	The revised procedures aim to improve the efficiency with which complaints are handled. The recommendations contained within the appended reports aim to reduce risk and improve efficiency in the way we interact with our customers.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	The purpose of the Children's Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Report is, in part, to improve the service we provide to Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

12. Our aim is to put people first and provide them with the best possible service. To make this aim a reality it is important people have the opportunity to tell us what they think about the services we provide. The Council's Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedures are one way they can do this. They can tell us when we get things wrong so we can put them right. They can also tell us when we get things right, make comments about the things we do and suggest new ways of doing things.
13. We understand that sometimes it is difficult to complain and work hard to ensure an organisational culture in which complaints are seen as a positive means of engagement and an opportunity for the Council to learn and improve services. If people do need to complain we always take their concerns seriously, treat them fairly and with respect and assure them they will not receive a poorer service as a result.
14. There was a slight increase in the overall number of representations made under the Adult Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure during 2022/23. While there was an increase in the number of complaints received, complaint numbers remained lower than pre-pandemic levels. There was a small decrease in the number of compliments and comments received. Full details are attached at Appendix 2. There was an increase in the overall number of representations made under the Children's Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure during 2022/23. There was an increase in the number of complaints received at Stage 1 of the procedure, bringing Stage 1 complaints roughly in line with pre-pandemic levels. There was an increase in the number of complaints received at Stage 2 and a small increase in the number of complaints received at Stage 3. The number of compliments received remained the same as 2021/22, while there was a small decrease in the number of comments received. Full details are attached at Appendix 3.
16. There was a decrease in the overall number of representations made under the Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure during 2022/23. While there was a decrease in the number of complaints received and Stage 1 and overall complaint numbers remained lower than pre-pandemic levels, the number of complaints received at Stage 2 remained the same as 2021/22, and higher than pre-pandemic levels. There was a decrease in the number of compliments and comments received, both of which remained lower than pre-pandemic levels. Full details are attached at Appendix 4.
17. There was an increase in the number of representations made under the Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure during 2022/23. There was an increase in the number of Stage 1 complaints received, which remained higher than pre-pandemic levels. There was a slight increase in the number of Stage 2 complaints received, with the number of Stage 2 complaints received also remaining higher than pre-pandemic levels. While there was an increase in the number of compliments received, compliments remained lower than pre-pandemic levels. There was a slight increase in the number of comments received. Full details are attached at Appendix 5.
18. The number of representations made under the Public Health Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure during 2022/23, remained the same as in 2021/22. There was a

slight increase in the number of complaints received, a slight decrease in the number of compliments received, while the number of comments received remained the same as in 2021/22. Full details are attached at Appendix 6.

19. Some examples of organisational learning resulting from complaints have been extracted from the appended reports and are provided below.

20. Adult Social Care Complaints:

- (a) MCA/DOLS/Safeguarding - to consider training staff to ensure decision making in respect of safeguarding referrals is timely, proportionate, recorded correctly and communicated to all parties effectively.
- (b) Mental Health - circulated national practice guidance and their own practice guidance for social workers and reviewed the website to ensure it provides information for the public on assessment processes.
- (c) Ongoing Assessment & Intervention Team (OAIT) - to consider documenting the care/support planning process in plain language to ensure service users are fully informed.
- (d) Responsive Integrated Assessment Care Team (RIACT) - to consider reminding staff of their duties under the Care Act in relation to assessments and support, particularly in relation to prevention of further need.
- (e) Brokerage - to ensure that when packages are amended due to the change in funding paths that the actuals reflect the correct hours provided, and system generated hours are checked.

21. Children's Social Care Complaints:

- (a) Children with Disabilities - to ensure all care team and looked after review meeting minutes are distributed in a timely manner.
- (b) Team A - to consider if it is possible to amend the assessment templates to include both parents individually, to prompt social workers to seek both parents views when they are separated.
- (c) Team B - the importance of detailed case recordings would be discussed at the monthly Practice Development Group and that the group would look for evidence of this happening or otherwise as part of their regular case file audits.
- (d) Team D - consider providing guidance/training for social workers about how to explicitly check understanding and make reasonable adjustments for parents with learning difficulties; consider amending internal processes to ensure that where parents have learning difficulties, their individual needs/difficulties are clearly highlighted on case records along with any reasonable adjustments that need to be made; and to consider developing simplified, accessible summaries of child and family assessments for parents with learning difficulties.

22. Corporate Complaints:

- (a) Development Management - explicit reference was made to the factors which can impact on the timeliness of planning enforcement matters in A Charter for Development Management.
- (b) Democratic - to update Constitution, clarifying the Council Procedure rules in relation to members of the public asking questions not pertinent to the subject matter at a special or extraordinary meeting.
- (c) Early Help - to ensure the process of investigating child protection concerns is clearly communicated to the person making the referral, so they are clear about how the information they have provided will be used. It was also agreed that the Children's Initial Advice Team would ensure decisions are clearly and accurately recorded.
- (d) Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) - to ensure it adheres to the SEND Code of practice and the Tribunal process when undertaking reviews of Education Health and Care (EHC) Plans.
- (e) Highway Asset Management - to ensure obstructions to the highway/lights, etc. are dealt with in a timely manner.

23. Housing Complaints:

- (a) Contact and Repairs Co-ordination - to use the learning from the complaint to inform the process being developed around requests for the installation of electric vehicle charging points and ensure this was shared with officers.
- (b) Contact and Repairs Co-ordination - to consider developing a process to ensure that when a new housing management officer takes over an area all pre-existing repairs are able to be followed up.
- (c) Housing Management - there was a review of time taken to install remeasured windows and a recommendation that items like this are dealt with by the Service Desk rather than at site level.
- (d) Housing Management - it was agreed that Housing Services would review the process with Environmental Health on pest infestation reports.
- (e) Income Management - it was agreed training would be provided by the Team Leader in relation to responses to detailed queries from customers via digital tenancy.

24. The further recommendations set out in the Children's, Corporate and Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports are:

- (a) Children's Services should work to improve the timeliness and quality of Stage 1 responses, in order to reduce the number of complaints being escalated to Stage 2.
- (b) Children's Services should work to improve performance against the Stage 2 timescale for Children's Social Care complaints.

- (c) The Complaints & Information Governance Team should continue working to improve performance against the Corporate Stage 2 complaint response target.
- (d) The Complaints & Information Governance Team should work to improve performance against the Housing Stage 2 response target.

Consultation

- 25. No consultation was required in preparing this report.