



CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL ADULT SOCIAL CARE

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK –

COMPLAINTS COMPLIMENTS

ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13

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INTRODUCTION

This report fulfills the statutory duty to monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure and produce an annual report for Adult Social Care complaints. The report will be presented to the relevant local authority committee and will be made available on the Council's website.

The report provides statistics for 2012/13 on the number of complaints received including those considered by the Local Government Ombudsman; the number of complaints that were well founded (upheld fully or in part); a summary of the complaints subject matter; performance; and the actions taken to improve services as a consequence of complaints.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council's Adult Social Care complaints procedure contains a number of different options to handle complaints. The complaints procedure requires individual complaints to be assessed with the emphasis on understanding the complaint at the outset and taking the right approach to resolving it. Services also seek to make improvements as a result of complaints.

Each option for handling complaints has a minimum standard timescale for responding:

- Local resolution by Service Manager – 10 working days, up to 20 for complex cases
- Independent Investigation – 25 up to 65 working days
- Conciliation – 10 working days
- Mediation – 25 working days

However, timescales can be flexible depending on the nature of the complaint. An extension to a timescale is acceptable where this is negotiated and communicated to the complainant. When the Council has fully considered a complaint the next stage is referral to the Local Government Ombudsman.

There were 61 new complaints received in the period compared to 82 the previous year, most related to services for older people.

53 complaints were actioned and closed. The majority (46) were dealt with by Local Resolution, and a further 3 cases remedied using conciliation.

Complaints were seen as important to services as a means of considering how to change things for the better. 72% of complaints were either upheld fully or in part suggesting a receptiveness to customers' views and complaints. Whilst individual cases had specific remedies put in place wider services improvements were also identified in a number of cases. These are detailed in Section 4.

There were more compliments than complaints this year with 64 compliments recorded where service users thanked or praised staff for the excellent service and support they had provided. This was an increase on the 58 reported in the previous year.

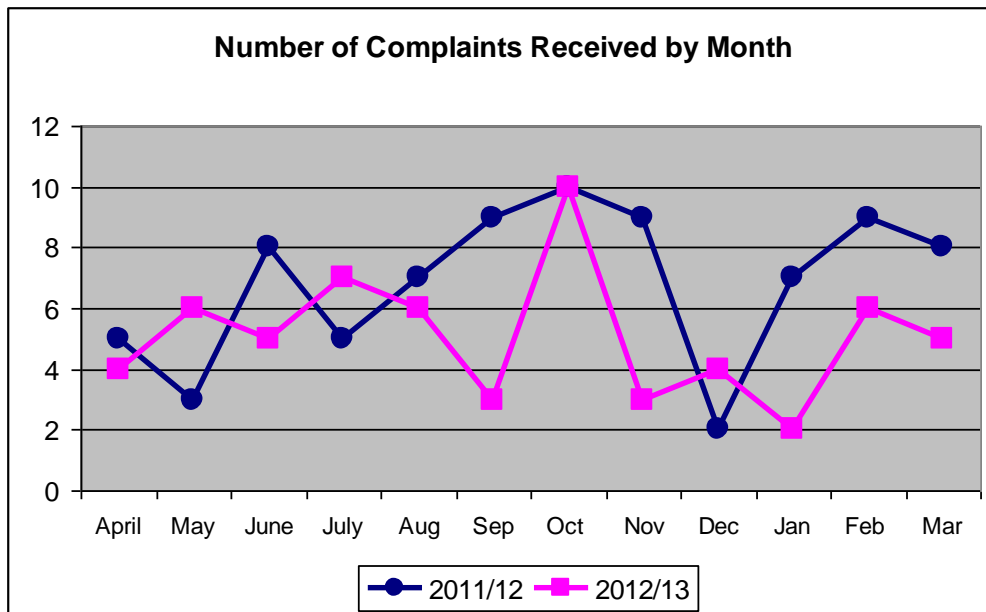
Service users and their families preferred to make complaints in writing via email or letters.

1 SUMMARY STATISTICS

1.1 Headline Data for Customer Feedback

Feedback Received	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Complaints	15	16	17	13	61
Compliments	14	19	21	10	64

1.2 Spread of Complaints Received



1.2.1 There were some similarities in the spread of complaints over the year compared to the previous year. December was one of the quieter months again. April and August saw similar numbers of complaints year on year. The peak for complaints in October last year was repeated again this year.

1.2.2 The peak of 10 complaints in October related largely to older people's services which received 8 complaints. There was no one cause for the peak in complaints with 4 complaints about delays handling direct payment issues, delay in putting in place care, disagreement with plans and customer care issues. Dissatisfaction in 3 cases relating to home care services and ranged from customer care; the quality of care and a missed call. The final complaint related to the quality of care in a residential home.

1.2.3 Health Services and Social Care Joint Complaints

There were 2 complaints received that related to both health and social care services delivered to an individual. Both received a coordinated single response to the issues.

1.3 Trends - Services Most Complained About

- 1.3.1 The service receiving the most complaints was the Older People Service receiving 40 of the 61 complaints. Section 4 sets out the improvements services have put in place as a result of customer complaints.

22 complaints related to social work management of cases. A complaint can have more than one reason for dissatisfaction. The main causes of dissatisfaction were; the level of communication or customer care (10); decisions made about the level of support offered (6) and delay in providing support (4).

- 1.3.2 18 complaints related to services provided by external providers on behalf of social care i.e. home care and respite/residential services:

13 complaints about home care were mostly about poor communication and customer care; quality of care; and late or missed calls.

5 complaints about residential care related to quality of care and poor communication or customer care.

Complaints about the quality of services provided by care providers on behalf of the council were shared with the Adult Services Improvement Group and the Contracts Service. Whilst each individual complaint was actioned the Contracts Service ensured wider concerns about providers were monitored and managed to address contract and quality issues.

- 1.3.3 The remaining 21 complaints were spread across a number of service areas; Learning Disability Service; Disabilities; Business Support; Emergency Duty Services and the Safeguarding Service. The Disabilities Service had the highest number with 8 cases. No trends were identified.

1.4 Outcomes from concluded Complaints

- 1.4.1 Complaints were seen as important to services as a means of considering how to change things for the better. 53 Social Care complaints were considered and concluded in the period. 36% (19) were upheld. A further 36% (19) were partly upheld. This meant a total of 72% were deemed to be well founded in full or in part, suggesting a receptiveness to customers' complaints.

Whilst case specific remedies were put in place for individuals Section 4 details wider actions and improvements resulting from complaints.

1.5 Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) Complaints

- 1.5.1 The council received 7 complaint enquiries from the LGO about its adult social care services:

- 1.5.2 In 3 cases the LGO did not investigate; in 2 cases this was because the Council's handling of the complaint was deemed to be reasonable; in 1 case the matters were outside of the LGO jurisdiction.

- 1.5.3 In 4 cases the LGO decided to discontinue its investigations;

- in 3 cases no fault was found;
- in an historical case from 2010/11, the Council had investigated and agreed there had been failures to follow up concerns about a care provider's approach to safeguarding. This related to a learning disability service. Significant steps had since been taken to improve the Council's approach. The LGO agreed that the Council's actions and offer of a local settlement of £1000 was an appropriate remedy.

1.6 Compliments

1.6.1 64 compliments were captured about the services provided. Compliments related to the quality, helpfulness and timeliness of services and support.

37	Older People's Services	13	Business Support Services
8	Learning Disability Services	4	Disability Services
1	Service User Engagement	1	Out of Hours Service

The Older People Service received the most compliments with 37 out of a total of 64. Whilst there were complaints about the level of customer care in some cases there were also compliments from customers who experienced very good levels of communication and professionalism.

1.6.2 Extracts from compliments received:

Reablement Service

'I would like to add how grateful and impressed we were with the service that was provided by the falls team following mums illness and fall ... The care they gave and the fact that mum didn't have to go back to hospital resulted in her full recovery. it took time but we were hugely relieved that she avoided a return to hospital.'

Older People's Service

Thank you so much for getting back to me so quickly in regards to my brother. You have been so supportive words are not enough to say thank you.

..a very big thank you ... unable to find the words to say what a great guy (worker) is and what brilliant work he has done. (Service user) said that he did not want the work done as he thought that it was going to make his house look like an eyesore, but he was wrong, he said that it looks beautiful and for the first time in ages he was able to go out, he feels free, he went out and sat in the street for a while and his wife asked him what he is doing? He said that he is doing that because he can and is no longer tied to the house. He is very happy.'

Business Support – Finance Service

' thanking those involved for all the help provided to keep his mother safe and well in her later years.'

'Thank you for your commendable and friendly way in which you have helped me with my mother's financial situation'.

Learning Disability Service

'Spoke very highly of the care management team and the support they gave to the whole family - they say that this support really helped them through what was quite a challenging time The caring attitude of everyone they have spoken to has really made a difference.'

2 PERFORMANCE IN COMPLAINTS HANDLING

- 2.1 There is no set timescale in Regulations in which to respond to complaints. The emphasis is on assessing the complaint at the outset to fully understand the issues, and then agreeing a clear method of handling the complaint to a defined timescale. In response to this the Adult Social Care complaint procedure includes a range of options for resolving complaints, each with a minimum standard timescale for response. Timescales can be re-negotiated with the complainant if appropriate.
- 2.2 There were seven complaints assessed as not being suitable for the Council's complaints procedure which were dealt with using other procedures including referral to other Agencies. 53 complaints were suitable to be considered and were concluded. 74% of cases had an action plan setting out how the complaint would be handled.
- 2.3 Of the 53 cases that were concluded:
- 46 were dealt with using the local resolution method;
 - 3 were dealt with by conciliation meeting method;
 - 3 cases were concluded following a formal investigation carried out by an external investigator; and
 - 1 was subject to a review of the initial local resolution response which was found to be proportionate and reasonable.
- 2.4 Where an action plan was in place approximately 85% of cases were completed in line with the timescale in the agreed action plan. Of the 6 cases that took longer than the planned timescale:
- 2 went over by a maximum of 2 working days;
 - 2 were delayed by 9 working days or less;
 - 2 complaints were delayed pending responses from Health Services.
- 2.5 There were 14 cases that did not have an action plan in place:
- 9 were completed within the 10 working days suggested for local resolution responses;
 - 3 cases went beyond the 10 working day timeframe for local resolution by up to 10 working days;
 - 2 cases were subject to longer delays and took 15 working days and 31 working days more than the 10 working day timescale for local resolution.

3 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY MONITORING

- 3.1.1 The purpose of capturing data is to monitor access to the complaints procedure; to ensure services are appropriate for all service user groups; and to check whether any issues relating to discrimination have been raised. Data relates to the service user affected by the complaint or a person who has been affected by the actions taken by the service.

3.1.2 The system used for Adult Social Care complaints has the facility to capture the service user's gender, ethnicity and whether the service user describes themselves as having a disability or not. However, the system has limited reporting functionality for analysis in this area to meet the needs of equality and diversity monitoring. Therefore, we can't easily analyse the detail of complaints and trends relating to discrimination/human rights/age.

3.1.3 There were 4521 service users in receipt of a service during the period 2012/13. 61 new complaints were registered.

3.2 Accessibility to Complaints

3.2.1 Receipt Method for Complaints

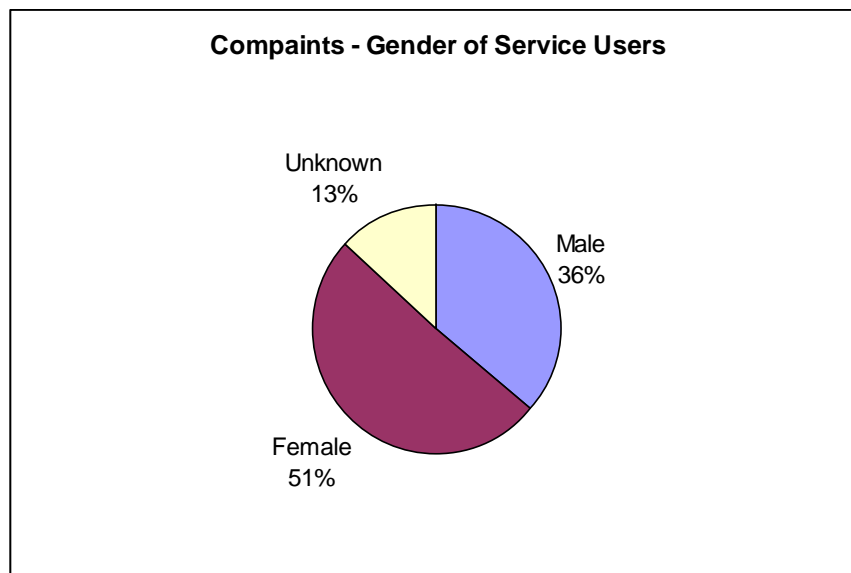
By having a range of contact options for complainants to make their complaints the Council aims to meet the needs of its service users in accessing the complaints procedure. People can make complaints in person; face to face or via telephone (including a direct line to Customer Relations), in writing; via email, letter, or complaint form.

61 new complaints were made by the following methods.

47% email	25 % telephone	21% letter
5 % complaint form	2 % personal visit	

3.2.2 Family members are often actively involved in supporting service users. A service user may use a representative to make their complaint. 65% of complaints were made by representatives. The majority of these were made by relatives or partners of the service user.

3.3 Social Care Complaints – Gender



3.3.1 Where information was captured 51% of complaints affected female service users, 36% affected males which reflected similar proportions of service users receiving services where 62% were described as female and 38% male. Service users of both genders are represented in the complaints procedure.

3.3.2 From the information recorded both genders were affected by similar issues, complaints about services affected females more than males.

3.4 Social Care Complaints – Race

3.4.1 94% of service users receiving services were described as White British. 56% of complainants were recorded as 'White UK'. One other race was also represented in complaints, 'White Irish' (3%). The 40% 'unknown' cases may mask representations from ethnic backgrounds not reflected here.

3.4.2 The issues for complainants of the minority race were also raised by complainants recorded as 'White'.

3.5 Social Care Complaints – Disability

3.5.1 In 28 % of complaints service users described themselves as having a disability. However, a significant proportion of cases were recorded as 'unknown'. Social care services include services for older people, disabilities and adults with learning disabilities. Therefore, it is anticipated that a significant proportion of complainants would describe themselves as having a disability.

3.5.2 The issues affecting people accessing the Disabilities Service (8 complaints) were about the quality of service relating to Direct Payments, Occupational Therapy assessments of need; review of needs and Home Care.

3.5.3 There was no single service issue causing concern for people accessing services for those with a learning disability. Where people complained (5) they were largely concerned about getting the right quality and level of care from external care providers.

3.5.4 The figures demonstrate that people with disabilities are able to access the complaints procedure.

4 SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS RESULTING FROM CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

The majority of the improvements identified in complaints are specific to individual cases and put in place to remedy the complaint, for example a review of services; providing information; carrying out an assessment.

The examples of learning from individual cases are set out below. In addition, the service is in the process of implementing a competency and development framework for staff which will assist in managing and developing social work practice moving forward.

4.1 Externally Provided Care Services (Commissioned Services)

The Commissioning Service routinely monitors complaints about care services and take appropriate steps to manage any concerns. Complaints data is considered alongside other relevant information. This includes regular liaison with operational staff, the safeguarding team, the Care Quality Commission, Health Services and other local authorities to support their investigations. Where appropriate the service worked with care providers on action plans and supported them in service improvement.

4.1.1 Learning & Improvements from Complaints about Commissioned Services

- Friends and family record sheets amended to be able to record details of times of telephone contact as well as details of content. Clearer recording will be undertaken in relation to confirmation of service users returning home and the travel arrangements.
- A review of procedures in relation to the delivery of intimate personal care.
- Checking system introduced to ensure that any confidential paperwork has to be brought into the office the same day.
- Employee training/guidance provided to strengthen communication channels with office staff to ensure that customers are kept informed of any updates and changes in the future.
- A care home was reminded of the requirement to give discharge dates earlier in the day to allow time for social workers to communicate with family and ensure correct equipment is in place.
- A provider put in place systems for monitoring late calls and carers' performance. Communication issues were addressed through an office meeting highlighting the need to be open and update clients on progress.
- A provider of home care carried out spot checks on care workers appearance and found some carers appearance was unacceptable. They were issued with new uniforms. The company put monitoring arrangements in place to check the appearance of their carers.

4.2 **Learning & Improvements from Complaints about Social Care Administration Services**

- 4.2.1 Learning from complaints is being incorporated into the improvements being made to the information, advice and support to be offered to recipients of Direct Payments. As part of this the information provided to customers in relation to contributions to respite care will be improved.

The Direct Payment Customer Agreement will also be updated, along with monitoring arrangements. These changes aim to deliver greater integration between the assessment and review of needs by social workers and the monitoring of Direct Payment expenditure.

- 4.2.2 Anyone who sends in an appeal against a decision about their assessed financial contribution will be written to with an explanation of the next part of the process and the timescale.

4.3 **Learning & Improvements from Complaints about Social Work Practice**

4.3.1 Learning Disability Service

The operations manager gave a commitment to ensure that the Senior Practitioners who directly supervise Care Managers are made aware of the risk of using review minutes to reflect details of another meeting without clarifying this to be the case. Also to ensure the family are provided with a copy of the review. Should a similar scenario occur in the future review minutes must clearly state where information relates to a separate meeting, or at least refer to any meeting notes taken separately as an addendum to the review minutes.

4.3.2 Older People's Service

A poor service was given when a senior in a team picked up a case to remedy previous poor experience with the aim of ensuring this did not happen again. The Locality Manager confirmed this would be addressed in supervision to prevent a repeat.

Communication has been improved to ensure departments are clear on respite homes specification. Processes are in place to ensure that social workers provide clients and their families with the correct information and contact details when ending their involvement. This followed a complaint where a former social worker did not inform the service user that they were leaving the department, and did not communicate the pre arranged respite dates which resulted in no respite. Practice will be monitored in supervision.

4.3.3 Emergency Duty Team (Out of Hours Service)

A complaint was received when information had not been relayed back to a family member. This occurred in a case where a number of family members had been making contact with the service over the same matter. It was acknowledged that the family wanted to ensure handovers between staff were managed more effectively. Where a number of calls are being received from different family members by out of hours officers, a co-ordinated approach will be agreed with the referrer. This will be communicated to other staff at the time of handover where required.

4.3.4 Complaint Handling:

Three learning sets were delivered in May 2012 to support managers and senior social workers staff to take a best practice approach to complaints including valuing complaints; action planning; learning from complaints; managing complaints about services provided by external companies; and managing difficult complaints.