

Central Bedfordshire Council

Social Care Health & Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee 14 December 2015

Customer Feedback – Complaints, Compliments Annual Report

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Purpose of this report

1. This report provides an overview of the key issue in complaint handling and the effectiveness of the complaints procedure for Adults Social Care for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

1. To consider and comment on the content of the report.

Issues

Adults Social Care customer feedback report

2. The Local Authority Social Services & National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 require monitoring of the effectiveness of the complaints procedure. The annual report should include; the number of complaints received including those considered by the Local Government Ombudsman; the number of complaints well founded; a summary of the complaints subject matter; performance; and the actions taken to improve services as a consequence of complaints.
3. The annual report addressed the requirements above and covers:
 - a) The Council's procedure for handling adult social care and public health complaints.
 - b) Summary Statistics including; number of complaints received; number referred to the Local Government Ombudsman; services most complained about; number well founded.
 - c) Performance.
 - d) Equality and Diversity Monitoring
 - e) Service improvements resulting from complaints.

4. The Council is required to make the annual report available to anyone who request it and one way this is done is through making it available on the 'Feedback' pages of the council's website. The feedback pages also contain information on how to provide compliments, comments and complaints.

Complaints handling practice in 2014/15

5. The current approach to complaints requires each complaint to be assessed and a decision on the appropriate course of action. In addition all complaints made to the Council about commissioned services have to be considered under the Council's complaints procedure.
6. In Adult Social Care learning from customer experience through complaints has led to improvements to practices. With 69% of complaints deemed to be well founded in full or in part complaints were seen as a valuable source of information about customer experience and an opportunity to remedy mistakes. The activity shows that Local Resolution has been an effective means of dealing with complaints with the majority resolved through local managers of the service complained about.
7. As well as the statutory annual report, weekly, monthly and quarterly reports on adult social care customer feedback have been provided based on the Director's requirements for performance reporting. This meant that senior managers had the opportunity to monitor customer feedback for their services. The number of complaints received this year (77) was lower than last year (85). There were also 63 compliments with good examples of great customer care and service.
8. The Council's Public Health Service delivers the majority of its services through commissioning from external providers who are expected to manage their own complaints. However, the Stop Smoking Service is delivered directly to residents by Central Bedfordshire Public Health staff. There were no formal complaints registered for the service. There were 25 compliments registered about the value of the stop smoking service and the helpfulness of staff.

Key themes from complaints

9. Services for older people was the area that received the most complaints with 46 of the 77 received. The main reasons for complaints were about how cases were managed by social workers; and care provided by both external companies on behalf of the Council and Council run residential homes. Service improvements were made as a consequence of complaints by both commissioned service providers and social care teams.

10. As part of their wider work to monitor commissioned services, the Contracts Team proactively seek service user feedback on their experience of the care provided. There are service user surveys both annually for residential care, and case by case for those receiving home care. In addition information from complaints is shared with the team who take appropriate steps to manage any wider contractual concerns. Where appropriate the Contracts Team worked with care providers to put in place action plans to improve.
11. The Local Government Ombudsman received five complaints about Adult Social Care. One case is pending a final decision. In one case fault was found and the Council agreed to pay £250 to remedy unavoidable distress related to the historical handling of a Direct Payment account. The practice has changed and there are regular reviews of accounts and improved information for customers.

Council Priorities

12. One of the Council's priorities is to promote health and well being and protect the vulnerable. Complaints are assessed at the point of receipt to ensure risks are managed for example; safeguarding of vulnerable adults issues, risks to reputation. Effective complaints management ensures service failings are identified and remedied. The Council is expected to have an accessible complaints procedure including notifying complainants of their right to raise complaints with the Local Government Ombudsman. The Adult Social Care service welcomes complaints and has an open and transparent approach to resolution including engagement with the Local Government Ombudsman to agree appropriate and proportionate remedies.

Corporate Implications

13. The Council is required to monitor the effectiveness of the statutory complaints procedures and prepare an annual report. The Adult Social Care & Public Health complaints report must be made available to any person on request.

Legal Implications

14. The Local Authority Social Services & National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 sets out the requirements in respect of monitoring complaints and the provision of an annual report.

Financial Implications

15. Effective management of complaint issues focuses resource on resolution and reduces the risks of financial remedies being paid. The learning from complaints is used to inform service improvements. The emphasis on local resolution and getting it right first time minimises the

risk of cases requiring more costly formal investigations to achieve resolution.

Equalities Implications

16. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation
17. To support vulnerable people to feel safe it is important that they know how to complain about services they receive, feel heard when they raise complaints and that action is taken where appropriate. The report evidences that service users have been able to complain and that where complaints have been upheld failings are identified and improvements are put in place.
18. Due to the limitations of the capture and reporting system for complaints the report includes limited analysis of equalities and diversity information. However the indications are that very few complaints include concerns relating to discrimination.

Conclusion and next Steps

19. The Committee is asked to note the Customer Feedback – Complaints, Compliments Annual Report 1 April 2014- 31 March 2015.

Appendices

20. The following Appendix:
21. Appendix 1 – Annual Report ASCHH & Public Health 2014/15.

Background Papers

22. The following background papers, not previously available to the public, were taken into account and are available on the Council's website:
None