

May 2012	Item:
People Services Executive Report	
Title: Annual Children's Social Care Compliments and Complaints Report 2011-2012	
Report Author: Linda Dutton – Children's Services Compliments and Complaints Manager	
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Purpose: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To report on the compliments and complaints received from April 2011 to March 2012.2. To highlight areas of learning resulting from complaints received during this period.	

1. Recommendations

- Care to be taken to ensure accurate recording in case files. This is a recommendation following the investigation of a Stage 2 complaint.
- Assessments/reports to be shared with the family or service user prior to completion to ensure accuracy. This also is a recommendation following the investigation of a Stage 2 complaint.
- The above recommendations were also made in the Complaints Manager's end of year reports for 2009-10 and 2010-11. However, the issues remain as a recurring topic in Stage 2 complaints investigations.
- All teams to provide information packs to service users 'new' to their teams. The information packs contain information on Children Social Care involvement, what the service user can expect from the team and what the team expects from the service user. The packs also contain information on support services that could be of help to the service user.
- Information Packs have been distributed by Family Support Teams and Children with Disabilities Team since the beginning of the 2012. A decrease in complaints received for 2011/12 could be attributed to the distribution of the Information Packs.
- Distribution of Information Packs by all Children's Social Care teams could see a further decrease in CSC complaints received.

2. Learning

- In the main learning from complaints received in 2011/2012 have been as a result of the Stage 2 complaint investigations.

- Many of these learning points have been implemented and have been integrated into work practice, other recommendations are being considered at the time of writing this report.
- Improvements to record keeping by Social Workers and Practice Managers. This is to include preparation of accurate chronologies and the need to evidence conclusions and recommendations.
- More robust management and scrutiny of case work.
- Ensure policy in relation to s17 support are widely known and understood.
- Social workers to be clear with parents, carers, and children what they mean when they say that contact needs to be supervised.
- Managers to receive legal training about the meaning of consent and undertakings.
- Mistakes and failings in Social Work Practice to be acknowledged with users as soon as they are identified.
- Improve facilities for meeting rooms for children. A mixture of toys appropriate for all age groups should be provided and drinks offered rather than given on request.
- Protocols to be agreed for joint working with adult services, especially in relation to working with parents with alcohol and drugs addiction difficulties.
- Team managers to be instructed to monitor social workers responsibilities in relation to statutory visits to children. The format of supervision records should be amended accordingly.

3. Complaints

- 93 complaints received for 2011/2012 compared to 107 for 2010/2011.
- This equates to a 13% decrease in complaints received for 2011/2012 compared to 2010/2011. For 2010/2011 there was a 26% increase compared to 2009/2010, for 2009/2010 a 33% increase compared to 2008/2009.
- Of the 93 complaints received for 2011/12, 4 were upheld, 12 partially upheld, 66 not upheld, and 10 withdrawn or cancelled.
- The teams receiving the highest number of complaints for 2011/2012 were the Family Support South East, Initial Response Team, and Children with Disabilities Team.
- There is no obvious reason for these teams to receive more complaints than other teams within Children's Social Care

Initial Response Team 13
Family Support South East 12
Children with Disabilities Team 11

- A recommendation from the 2010/11 complaint report was for CSC involvement with every family to be fully explained and understood.
- Information Packs are now given to families working with some CSC teams to explain CSC involvement, what the families can expect from the team and what the team expects from the family. The packs also give details of relevant services for the families to access.
- The distribution of the Information Packs could be a contributory factor in the reduction of complaints received for this year.

4. MP and Councillor Enquiries

- Councillor Enquiries are now co coordinated by the Corporate Complaints Team; I am therefore unable to report on these figures.
- Seventeen MP enquiries were received for 2011/2012 compared to 10 for 2010/2011 an increase of 70%. There is no obvious cluster or theme resulting in an increase in MP enquiries.

5. Compliments Received

- 90 Compliments received, 44 Internal, 46 External, for 2011/2012. This compares to 37 Compliments received, 25 Internal 12 External, in 2010/2011.
- This equates to a 143% increase overall in compliments logged for 2011/2012 compared to 2010/2011.
- 76% increase for internal compliments logged for 2011/2012 compared to 2010/2011.
- 283% increase for external compliments logged for 2011/2012 compared to 2010/2011.
- The increase in compliments logged could be attributed to the Complaints Manager, when attending team meetings, reminding team members to forward any compliments received to the Complaints Manager for logging.
- Compliments are also circulated by Head of Service and Team Managers.

6. Stage 2 Complaints

- Two Stage 2 complaints investigations were carried over from 2010/2011 as the investigations were not completed by the end of that year.

- These two investigations are now concluded, with compensation being awarded to the complainants in both cases.
- The two Stage 2 complaints carried over from 2011/2012 were partially upheld.
- Learning and recommendations from these investigations are reported under number 2 of this report.
- Two new Stage 2 complaint investigations were carried out for 2011/12.
- Both Stage 2 complaints for 2011/2012 were partially upheld.
- Compensation was awarded to the complainant following one of the investigations.
- No complaints were escalated from Stage 2 to Stage 3 in 2011/2012.

7. Local Government Ombudsman

- 1 LGO Enquiry was received in 2011/2012; this was a joint enquiry with CWB.
- The LGO did not continue with their enquiry once all the requested information had been received.

8. Late and Extended Responses.

- 17 complaint responses were extended in 2011/2012, compared to 9 in 2010/2011.
- This equates to an increase of 88% of complaint responses extended in 2011/2012 compared to 2010/2011.
- All extensions are recorded as being due to the unavailability of key staff, i.e. because of either annual leave or sick leave.
- There is a problem for managers (mainly within Family Support and IRT) having available time away from other duties to interview staff involved in complaints and produce a response.

9. Mystery Shopper Exercise

- A mystery shopper complaints exercise was carried out between November 2011 and January 2012
- Six teams were randomly picked to receive 'complaints'

- In all cases the 'complaint' was forwarded to the Complaints Manager within the five day response deadline for acknowledging complaints
- One team responded direct to the 'complainant' by sending a complaints leaflet to the 'complainant'.
- The 'complaint' received by this team related to a request for details on the process for making a complaint.
- The 'complainant' had concerns about the work practices of a social worker, and was not sure if they wished to make a complaint at that time.
- The approach would have been more customer friendly if the manager had sent a covering letter showing concern that the 'complainant' believed they may have had a complaint.
- If this had been a real contact from a possible complainant such an action could have prevented a formal complaint.

10. Conclusion

- The vast majority (82%) of CSC complaints are responded to within the set deadlines.
- CSC continues to produce good quality responses to complaints. Therefore complaints are not escalated to Stage 2 due to the quality of the response.
- Complaints are escalated because complainants are not happy with the outcome of their complaint, not the quality of the response.
- The receipt of fewer complaints in 2011/2012 (93 compared to 107 in 2010/2011) could be attributed to the distribution of Information Packs to families to explain CSC involvement.
- The packs explain what the families can expect from the teams, and what the teams expect from them.
- Any team not currently distributing Information Packs should implement this practice as soon as possible.
- Distribution of the packs by all CSC teams could see a further reduction in complaints receive by Thurrock CSC.