

**Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny
Management Committee**

9 January 2023

Report of the Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer

Annual Complaints Report April 2021 to March 2022

1. Summary

- 1.1 This covering report provides Committee with a snapshot of the full Annual Complaints Report April 2021 to March 2022 which is shown in full at Annex 1.

2. Background

- 2.1 The council produces and publishes the annual report covering:

- Complaints about adults (including Public Health) and children's social care services which are dealt with under two separate pieces of legislation
- Complaints about other council services dealt with under the council's Corporate Complaints and Feedback procedures
- Ombudsmen cases – both the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS)
- Other feedback including compliments received.

- 2.2 This annual report has been to the council's Governance Risk and Assurance Group (GRAG) and Council Management Team (CMT) for information prior to it coming to Corporate and Customer Services Scrutiny Management Committee.

3. Children's Social Care complaints overview

- 3.1 Whilst the council's Corporate Governance Team (CGT) receive copies of compliments received by this service area, we know that

many more are received that are either not recorded or passed on. However, some examples recorded are:

- Social worker wonderful, quick to answer, sorted out holiday and overnight respite
- Thanks to social worker for all their support with the family
- Thanks to worker for all their help with Children in Need and family
- Thanks, from a judge for all the preparation and hard work on the case
- Worker great moving things forward, supporting adoption process, valued support & input

- 3.2 In Children's social care complaints, the CGT conduct an assessment of the issues raised including severity, complexity, risk to the customer and other customers, risk to the authority, history of similar complaints and likelihood of future similar complaints to grade the complaint into Stage 1, 2 or 3. Other considerations include, the outcomes wanted to resolve the complaint, who is best placed to consider and effectively respond to the complaint and the complainant's views of how the complaint should be dealt with.
- 3.3 There was a reduction in the total number of complaints under the children's social care procedure during 20/21 compared to the number received the previous year. It fell from 55 to 42.
- 3.4 There was an increase in complaints dealt with through the corporate 4Cs policy from 1 in the previous year, to 4 in 20/21.
- 3.5 It is important to note though numbers of complaints received can fluctuate each year and is typical of social care complaints received across Yorkshire and Humberside.
- 3.6 From work undertaken to understand this decrease, we determined there were a few factors involved. These include actions taken as a council and in the service area, following the public maladministration report from the LGSCO a few years ago. Part of this was providing a programme of staff training and awareness sessions to increase their understanding of the procedure and how they can ensure children and young people are aware of and can be supported, to make complaints.

- 3.7 Feedback from complaints especially where there are related themes, provides the service area with invaluable information to review and improve the services they provide. In this annual report, the main theme concerned a lack of action including failings in communication.
- 3.8 Work is already underway to improve these ongoing areas of concern.
- 3.9 There are also concerns regarding number of cases where responses were sent late, or we have had to record as no response. This may be due to CGT not being sent a copy of the response or being informed that a verbal response has been given. Managers have been reminded that it is important that updates including copies of responses are provided to CGT in a timely way.

4. Adults Social Care complaints overview

- 4.1 Similar as in Children's Social Care, we are aware that not all compliments received are recorded as more will be received that are either not recorded or passed on to CGT. Some examples of those that have been recorded from the report are:
- Thank you for efforts regarding breakdown cost
 - Helpful, clear, and thorough in how dealt with the issues
 - Really supportive, has been reliable and easy to communicate with
 - Thanks to Be Independent for call out services.
 - Thanks for help to assist relative to stay at home for so long and the peace of mind it has given
- 4.2 In adults social care complaints, we must use the Department of Health's tool for grading or assessing the seriousness of complaints and to decide the relevant action. This is shown in section 26 of the report at Annex 1.
- 4.3 There was an increase in the total number of complaints in 20/21 compared to the previous year that were dealt with under the legislative adult's social care complaints requirement – it rose from 28 to 42. This included 3 graded as red in 20/21 compared to 0 the year before.

- 4.4 It is important to note though that receiving larger numbers of complaints is not always a negative, because it can be partly a reflection that the procedures we have in place, are accessible and customers are supported to make complaints which provide invaluable feedback.
- 4.5 Feedback from complaints especially where there are related themes, provides the service area with invaluable information to review and improve the services they provide. In this annual report concerns are identified about the increase in the number of complaints about disagreeing with assessment, a lack of action and quality of advice/communication. The CGT continue to work with senior managers to ensure any lessons are identified and service improvements made where necessary. Examples of where this happened are in section 39 of the report at Annex 1:

5. Corporate 4Cs Overview

- 5.1 The corporate 4Cs policy and procedure is used for all complaints about council services where there is no statutory procedure or legal/appeal process.
- 5.2 We record compliments received across these council services and areas and although as in Adults and Children's social care, we know not all are recorded, some examples are:
- Man cutting grass verges is doing a great job
 - Thank you to our recycling crew who have improved their handling of our collections
 - Thank you assisted collection was collected after reporting
 - Thanks to licensing staff, you made the process seamless
 - Thanks to housing maintenance and repairs really delighted with the workmanship and our service altogether.
 - Thanks to NEO team for help with noise complaints
 - To parking staff, help was invaluable
 - To Registrars a wonderful day. We both enjoyed every moment, and the service was truly exceptional.
 - Thank you to the department planting the wild flower beds along the central reservation of the Hull Road
 - Thanks to council tax staff for being professional and patient making a positive experience.

5.3 The corporate 4Cs process for investigating and responding to corporate complaints was implemented at the beginning of this reporting period and included the change from 3 hierarchical stages to 2 grades. The appropriate grade or referral to the relevant Ombudsman is assessed by the CGT taking account of

- The risk to the customer and the authority
- The severity of the risk
- whether the issues in question are a one off, are a reoccurrence and likelihood of reoccurrence.

5.4 The timescales were also changed to

- Grade One - 20 working days (10 for Housing Complaints in line with the Housing Ombudsman guidance)
- Grade Two - 30 working days (20 for Housing Complaints in line with the Housing Ombudsman guidance)

5.5 It is important to note that where there are large numbers of complaints received for a directorate/service area, this is where services are provided to every household in York weekly and is probably the most highly visible council service.

5.6 Corporate 4cs provide senior managers with useful information in respect of the way that services are delivered, and examples of improvements made are:

- The parking team check the counters on the carparks on a quarterly basis
- Crew reminders and monitoring
- Reminders to staff about access arrangements for assisted waste collections
- Repairs completed

6. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)-overview

6.1 The LGSCO provides an annual review letter about the council covering April to March each year which includes tables presenting the number of complaints and enquiries received about

the council and the decisions the LGSCO has made during the reporting period. This is to help us assess our performance in handling complaints. It includes the number of cases where the LGSCO's recommendations remedied the fault and the number of cases where they decided we had had offered a satisfactory remedy during our local complaints process. In these latter cases the LGSCO provides reassurance that we had satisfactorily attempted to resolve the complaint before the person went to them.

6.2 The LGSCO received 71 cases about the council in April 2021 to March 2022 with 71 cases being concluded within this time. (This includes cases which may have been received but not concluded in the previous reporting period). Of the 71 cases, 22 were considered as a detailed investigation and of these 19 were upheld.

6.3 Further details about LGSCO cases are set out in section 2 of the report at Annex 1.

7. Recommendations

Committee are asked:

7.1 To note the details contained in the annual report

7.2 To provide any feedback or comments to CGT by 31 January 2023 ahead of the publishing of the report on the council's website.

Reason: To ensure that processes for monitoring complaints remain effective.

Contact Details

Author of covering report:

Lorraine Lunt
Information Governance &
Feedback Team Manager
Telephone: 01904 554145

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Bryn Roberts
Director of Governance and
Monitoring Officer

Author of annual complaints report:

Cath Murray
Corporate Governance
Operational Manager
Telephone 01904 554145

Report Approved Date 19 December 2022

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the covering report

Annexes

Annex 1 – Annual Complaints Report April 2020 to March 2021

Background Information

Not applicable