

Children & Young People Select Committee:

Complaints and PIR

Suzanne Smith, Assistant Director (ARBD)

Colin Payne, Head of Information Governance & Business Support

James McKenzie, Customer Relations and Complaints Manager

Annual Complaints Report (ACR)

- **statutory context and process**
 - a public document published each financial year under regulation 13(3), The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006
 - provides a mechanism by which Hampshire County Council's Children's Services Department can be kept informed about:
 - the operation and effectiveness of its complaints procedure; and
 - support learning from complaints
 - The latest ACR covers the reporting period 01 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, included with these slides as Appendix A
 - must include key information as set out in statutory guidance

Annual Complaints Report (ACR)

- **key volumetrics and findings**

- A total of 1,628 representations received - significant increase of 53% from 2020/21
- On average, the department receives 99 representations per month
- Of the 359 pre-complaints received, less than half (40.7%) became formal complaints
- 25% increase in compliments received in 2021/22 compared to 2020/21
- During 2021/22, the average time taken to investigate and respond to:
 - new children's social care (CSC) stage one complaints was 9.6 working days - a reduction of 2.4 working days on average
 - corporate stage two complaints, the average was 14 working days - an increase of the average number of working days for the first time since the 2019/20

Annual Complaints Report (ACR) - 2

- **key volumetrics and findings**

- CSC complaints - positive movement around timescale compliance:

- 49% of **CSC complaints** were responded to within 10 working days at stage one (47% in 2020/21);
- 46% between 10-20 working days (also 46% in 2020/21) and
- 5% exceeded the maximum 20 working day limit (16% in 2020/21).
- 40% of **corporate complaints** were responded to within 10 working days at stage two (47% in 2020/21);
- 49% between 10-20 working days (50% in 2020/21) and
- 11% exceeded the maximum 20 working day limit (3% in 2020/21).

- 'Parents' continue to be the group most likely to make a complaint to Children's Services (87% of all complaints)

- The three highest categories for the **reason (nature)** why:

- social care complaints are made continue to be 'conduct of worker', 'insufficient support from Children's Services' and 'poor communication'
- corporate complaints are made continues to be around 'poor communication' (33%), 'Delay' (23%) relating specifically to the EHCP process, followed by complaints around the EHCP process (15%).

Annual Complaints Report (ACR) - 3

- **key volumetrics and findings**

- For CSC stage one complaints, the predominant **outcome sought** has changed from 'change of social worker' (30) in 2020/21 to 'complaint issues investigated' (122) in 2021/22.
- The main **outcome being sought** for corporate complaints was for 'Better Communication' (17%), followed by 'Complaint Issues Investigated' (10%) and 'EHCP to be finalised' (10%).
- 93% of the **actual outcomes** achieved during the reporting period for CSC stage one complaints were either 'Explanation' (61%), 'Apology & Explanation' (30%) or 'Apology' (2%). Corporate stage two complaints actual outcomes were the same categories as for CSC stage one complaints, 'Apology & Explanation' (58%), 'Explanation' (24%) or 'Apology' (5%)

Complaints Recovery Plan

- **Actions and Next Steps**

The report identified five recommendations for CSCT or the wider department to implement or monitor, as appropriate, during the 2022/23 reporting period. These have mainly been consumed into the service recovery plan.

- The plan focuses on three key areas:
 - Increasing Operational Capacity;
 - Tackling Demand; and
 - Service Efficiencies.

Complaints Recovery Plan (2)

Increasing Operational Capacity

- **Children's Services Complaints Team (CSCT)**
 - Recruited a new Customer Relations and Complaints Manager
 - Feb '22 = 6 FTE, Nov '22 = 8.6 FTE
- **Investigating Officer (IO) Pool**
 - Historically, national picture of complaints teams being unable to fully resource suitable candidates
 - In Dec '21, CSCT had only 4 IOs
 - A recruitment drive by CSCT has seen a significant increase in the number of suitable individuals added to this resource pool - 650% increase of IOs
 - Dedicated IOs – increased from one to two
- **Independent Person (IP) pool**
 - In Dec '21, CSCT had only 8 Independent Persons
 - 138% increase of Independent Persons since Dec '21
 - able to assign individuals in line with the increased number of IOs.

Complaints Recovery Plan (3)

Tackling Demand

- Phone calls/meetings with complainants
- New complaints form
- Updated guidance
- Learning lessons and preventing reoccurrence
- Reporting
- Strong engagement by services

Complaints Recovery Plan (4)

Service Efficiencies

- The CSCT reviewed its performance and processes and identified several process improvements. Some examples of those changes are as follows:
 - Updated use of Outlook functions 'Quick Parts' or 'Templates' - Reducing processing time.
 - Update and optimise the use of e-forms to collect all supporting information - Reduced email traffic and removal of some enquiry volume & related processing time.
 - Improved definition of complaints and the correct process for the complainants desired outcomes.
 - Simplified response templates, removing unclear language and unnecessary details which can be simplified.
 - Cross skilling the team in all elements of the process to increase capacity.
 - Reporting on significant elements of the process to drive a culture of continuous improvement and evidence-based decision making.

Public Interest Report (PIR)

- **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Determination**

- On 26 June 2022, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) issued a report under Section 30 of the Local Government Act 1974 (Act) regarding determination of an investigation against the County Council. A copy of the report is included with these slides as Appendix C. The report sets out details of the complaint, findings, conclusions and recommendations of the LGSCO.
- Where a report is issued by the LGSCO under Section 30 of the Act, the County Council is required to formally consider the recommendations and confirm to the LGSCO the action it has taken or proposes to take. The LGSCO has indicated the reasons behind the issuing of a report under Section 30 of the Act within its report, and we accept that we got aspects of this case wrong, and lessons have been learned and actions undertaken.
- The recommendations of the LGSCO in respect to the complainant have been completed. The County Council has issued an apology to the complainant and paid a symbolic amount in consideration of the time and trouble taken to make the complaint and to cover the cost of journeys until suitable transport was in place. A further action in respect of reviewing wider aspects of the service is in progress in accordance with the Ombudsman's timescale.