

Children's Social Care Statutory Customer Feedback Report 2017-2018

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Cabinet Member: Frances Nicholson, Cabinet member for children and families

Division and Local Member: All

1. Summary

- 1.1.** Somerset County Council [SCC] has a statutory obligation to report on the operation of its complaints procedure in relation to Children's Social Care Services but extends the scope of that report to cover all customer facing services. The report contains an executive summary followed by 3 separate detailed sections, one each for Children's Services, Adult Services and Economy and Community Infrastructure (ECI). The executive summary along with the relevant detailed section will each be considered at the appropriate Scrutiny Committee before the report is signed-off by Cabinet.

The Annual report (attached as an Appendix) includes; the number of complaints at each stage of the process, a summary of the annual review data provided to the Council by the Local Government Ombudsman, timescale and outcomes of complaints; which customer groups made complaints; learning and service improvements and a summary equality monitoring data. In addition to this, the annual report contains a summary of the compliments and comments received by the service.

- 1.2.** The customer feedback function and this report support the council in ensuring that customers' needs are understood and appropriately met. It helps identify ways in which our organisation might improve and deliver better outcomes for customers.

2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

- 2.1.** The committee is asked to review and provide any appropriate comments on the information contained within the executive summary and/or detailed Children's section of this report.
- 2.2.** The committee is invited to make comment and suggestion regarding improvement actions resulting from this report.

3. Background

- 3.1.** SCC invites customer feedback and sees it as a tool for service improvement. Complaints about Children's services can fall under either the corporate complaints process or the statutory process as defined by the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006, depending on the nature of the complaint. The corporate process is two stage. Initially complaints

are managed by the appropriate manager within the service to which the complaint relates. The majority of complaints are resolved at this stage. If a complainant remains unhappy after a stage one response, the complaint is escalated to the Customer Experience Team (CET) who will provide independent scrutiny of the complaint and of the investigation and response by the service. CET will appropriately challenge in order to fully understand the issues raised and the response given. Having reviewed the complaint the CET will advise the service and the complainant of the next steps. These will depend on the circumstances of the case but might include upholding the service's original decision and referring the customer to the LGO, changing the original stage 1 outcome and organising appropriate remedy or commissioning a more detailed investigation. Where the complaint falls under the statutory process complaints escalated to stage 2 will be investigated by an Investigating Officer and an Independent Person. If a complainant remains unhappy at this stage an independent panel hearing will be organised.

In complaints where fault is identified (through SCCs own process or through LGO scrutiny), the CET will work with services to ensure remedy and to extract and implement learning.

4. Implications

- 4.1. The Authority has a statutory duty to establish and publicise its procedure for dealing with representations and complaints about its services and must publish an annual report in relation to statutory children's feedback. It is considered best practice to publish an annual summary of feedback across all Council services and SCC adheres to this. This report will be published on the SCC website following cabinet sign-off in October 2018.

5. Background papers

- 5.1. The annual report for the previous financial year and our current Customer Feedback Handling Guidance is available here:
<http://www.somerset.gov.uk/have-your-say/complaints-comments-and-compliments/complaints-comments-compliments/>

Note For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author