

**Open Report on behalf of Janice Spencer OBE,  
Interim Director of Children's Services**

Report to:	<b>Corporate Parenting Panel</b>
Date:	<b>25 July 2019</b>
Subject:	<b>Compliments, Comments &amp; Complaints received for Looked After Children</b>

**Summary:**

This report provides the Corporate Parenting Panel with information on the Compliments, Comments & Complaints received regarding Looked After Children for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.

In the 12 month period there was one complaint from a young person in Lincolnshire County Council care. During this period no compliments were received regarding Looked After Children.

**Actions Required:**

Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are requested to consider the Compliments, Comments & Complaints received for Looked After Children and highlight any recommendations for future consideration.

## **1. Background**

Lincolnshire County Council Children's Service Statutory Complaints Procedure is a process consisting of three stages.

**Stage 1** is for the local management team to resolve the complaint as informally as possible and as near to the point of delivery of service as can be achieved. It is always good practice to involve the young person in reaching a resolution as it can engender in them a sense of empowerment and demonstrate that they can be part of the decision making in relation to determining their futures.

**Stage 2** is an independent investigation into the concerns of the young person. This is undertaken by an independent investigator accompanied by an independent person both of whom are independent of the council.

**Stage 3** is an independent review panel consisting of three independent people who review the way in which the young person's complaint has been dealt with.

If the young person still remains dissatisfied they can progress their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman.

All young people who are considering or wish to make a complaint have the right to have an advocate appointed to help them make their complaint.

It is important the complaint process is viewed positively as a source of information which can identify improvements in the services provided to those receiving them.

Young people can also pass on a compliment, comment or complaint on the service they receive via their support worker, advocate or on line at [www.lincolnshire.gov.uk](http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk) via email to [CustomerRelationsTeam@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:CustomerRelationsTeam@lincolnshire.gov.uk) or by telephone to the Feedback team on 01522 843322 or in writing to Customer Relations Team, Lincolnshire County Council, County Offices, Newland, Lincoln, LN1 1YL.

### Ways in which Looked After Children can Complain

- Through statutory reviews
- Regulation 33 visits
- Residential meetings
- Through their Social Worker
- Complaints leaflet issued to every child in care
- Total Voice Lincolnshire/ Barnardo's
- Voices for Choices

### Analysis of Complaints

#### Complaints received from looked after children

Date of Complaint	Gender	Age of Complainant	Nature of Complaint	Outcome
01.08.2018	Male	17 years	Complaint regarding an age assessment that was carried. Individual was an unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child. Assessment indicated that individual may be older than had been stated.	Unsubstantiated

A complaint was received from 1 young person during this period:

- a) The complaint was received via the LGO. The young person (YP) complained directly to the LGO before going through Lincolnshire County Councils internal procedure. The complaint then came to children's after which it was noted that the complaint had already been responded to by Legal Services.

The YP stated that upon his entrance to the UK he was assessed by social services to determine his age. The YP advised of his date of birth but had no documentation to support the information he had provided. The assessment determined that the YP was older than had been stated. It was decided that another assessment would be completed.

The YP advised that despite agreement that another assessment should be undertaken this was left for a lengthy period of time causing distress due to the YP not knowing his future status.

Although passed to Children's in South Holland to respond it was then ascertained that Legal Services had responded to the YP as the complaint had reached them first via the LGO and due to the sensitive nature of the complaint raised. The complaint was found to be unsubstantiated as all assessments were carried out as per the legal parameters applied to Age Assessments.

- b) There were 4 complaints to LAC as a department, including the one above but the remainder were not received from a current looked after child.

## **2. Other Activity of the Complaints Service**

The complaints services, and in-scope staff, were TUPE'd back in house on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2019 providing the authority with greater control in shaping the future of the complaints service. The future will see changes to staffing structure and internal processes with emphasis being placed on early resolution wherever achievable. It is anticipated that this will be fully implemented by the first week of August 2019. Part of this process has been the implementation of an updated policy and procedure. A new case management system (Lagan) has also been introduced from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019. The system will enable detailed reporting, contributing to improved learning and timeliness. This system will also facilitate detailed recording of cases allowing in-depth analysis of complaints being made to the authority.

As a result of these changes and the revised policy, a new training package is to be produced later this year and delivered to ensure that the new ways of working and expectations are clearly communicated to all staff. This will continue to be a combination of e-learning and face to face training.

## **3. Conclusion**

Due to the small number of complaints raised in relation to Looked After Children, it is difficult to pin point any stand out areas which should be reviewed. Out of the four complaints that were raised 2 were unsubstantiated and 2 were partly substantiated. It should be noted that both partly substantiated complaints were in relation to the same child and the same issue, raised roughly around the same time as one another, but by different parties with interest in the child. Due to historic ways of working it was not noted that this was the case and it should be agreed that these two cases represent a single complaint.

Moving forward the team will work to ensure that a full picture is gleaned before a case is progressed to the first stage of the complaints process.

#### **4. Background Papers**

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Shay Noreen, Corporate Project Support Officer, who can be contacted on 01522 552078 or [Shagofta.Noreen@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Shagofta.Noreen@lincolnshire.gov.uk)