

**Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director –
Children’s Services**

Report to:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date:	09 October 2020
Subject:	Children’s Services Annual Statutory Complaints Report 2019-20

Summary:

This report introduces the Annual Complaints Report for Children's Services. This is a statutory requirement and serves to update the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on the performance of Children's Services in relation to complaints. The report only addresses complaints relating to Social Care in line with the statutory requirement and does not contain any data relating to complaints about the wider Children's Services.

Actions Required:

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is invited to review and comment on the Annual Complaints Report for 2019/20.

1. Background

Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) is an authority that welcomes all feedback which may serve to increase understanding of the experiences of customers who receive services. With this in mind, the authority is keen to make use of complaints as a means of improving services for children and their families. It is anticipated that the speedy resolution of complaints will maximise the prospect of a good outcome.

This report is written in compliance with the statutory complaints guidance issued by the Department of Education – Getting the Best from Complaints. The report deals with complaints received by children, Young People and their families between the period of 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020. This report is provided under the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009. This report fulfils the Council's statutory duty to produce a report.

This report seeks to outline the themes which arise from complaints received and identify any learning which may be required in order to improve service provision.

The Complaints Service returned in house in 2018 and has been completely reviewed with new processes adopted. A restorative approach was applied and for the second year running this has led to a reduction in the number of complaints that progress to stage one. Early resolution is a proactive response to a member of the public who expresses dissatisfaction at any aspect of the service they or a family member have received from Children's Services. The number of complaints decreased in the period of this report to 111 complaints. 35 contacts were dealt with by way of early resolution, which meant they did not progress to stage one of the complaints process. The Customer Services Team is very supportive of the service in attempting to achieve early resolution. Of the 111 complaints only 10 were substantiated. Of these five were due to lack of communication by staff, three due to conduct and attitude of staff, and two were data breaches. 24 of the 111 complaints were partially substantiated: nine due to staff conduct and attitude, six due to lack of communication, six due to delay in service and three due to errors in assessment. 69% of all complaints were unsubstantiated.

It is of concern that the main causes of complaints are staff conduct and attitude and poor communication. Although numbers are small, these are issues which should not arise. The annual report is shared through the Quality Assurance (QA) Board and disseminated to all staff which should raise awareness around the causes for complaints and actions that staff could take to prevent complaints being made. An e-learning training package is also in the process of being developed which will endeavour to address these issues.

One complaint escalated to stage 2 and was resolved at this stage. No complaints reached stage 3.

Nine referrals were made to the Local Government Ombudsman but no faults were found in relation to LCC.

The annual complaint report can be found as an attachment to this report.

2. Conclusion

Progress continues to be made to reduce the number of complaints being made and a proactive effort to resolve any contact early has been successful. Managers in Children's Services are well engaged with the Customer Relations Team and working hard to increase early resolution and address with staff the reasons for the complaints in order to drive the numbers even lower. The early resolution process is instrumental to our restorative practice approach which continues to be embedded throughout Children's Services. Whilst numbers of complaints are small and reducing we are not complacent and are keen to reduce even further.

3. Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

N/A

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Annual Complaints Report 2019-20

5. 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 Carolyn Knight, who can be contacted on 01522 553732 or Carolyn.knight@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

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